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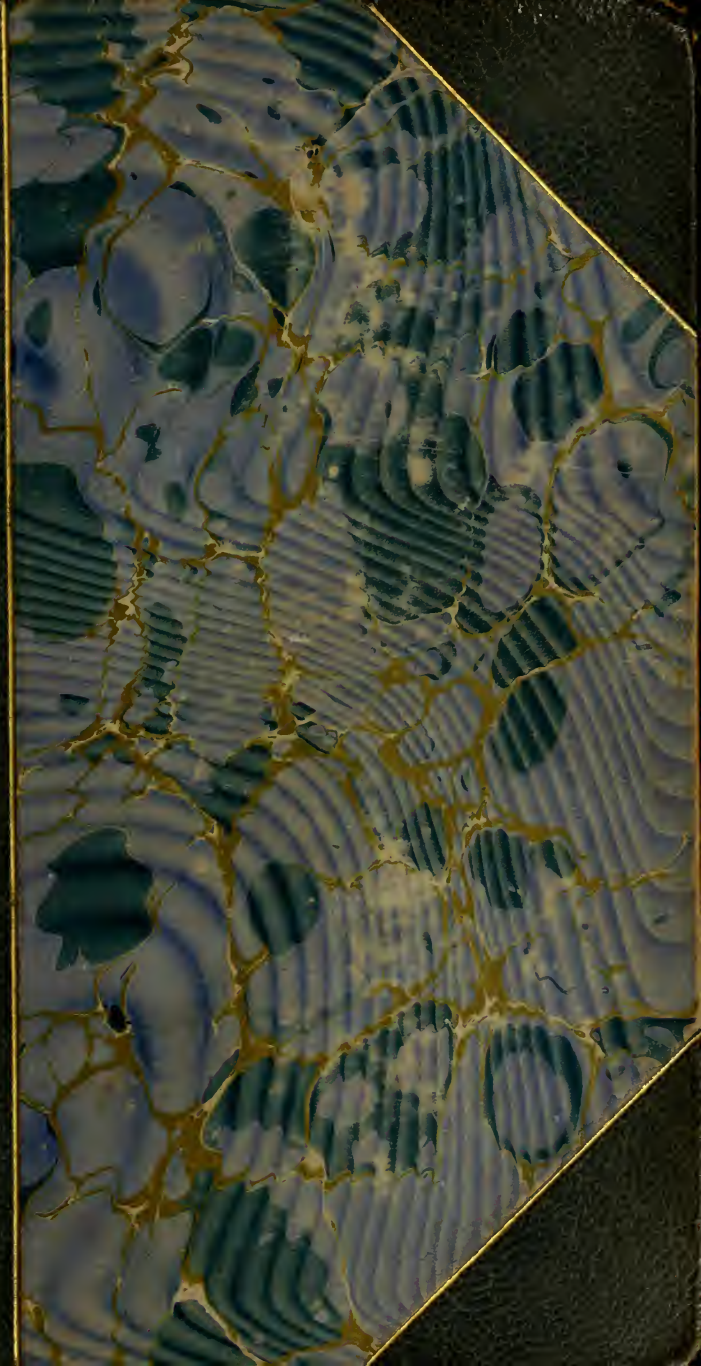

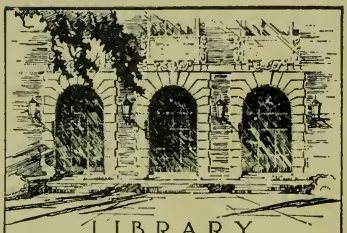

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When Charles the First was King.

By J. S. Fletcher,

Author of "The Winding Way," "Andrewlina," "Mr. Spivey's Clerk," etc.

In Three Volumes.

Vol. III.

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WHEN CHARLES THE FIRST WAS KING.

CHAPTER I.

OF OUR RIDE IN SEARCH OF ROSE.

WE rode in silence down the rough lane that leads from Baghill to Darrington, keeping along the stretch of grass at the wayside as much as possible, so that the sound of our horses' feet might be deadened. Down the hill we went into Darrington, and past the cross-roads, where two or three men still lingered at the door of the inn and watched us curiously as we sped along. All that time we had spoken no word, but both

of us were full of rage and horror at the news brought to us by Belwether. I had ridden out at first half dazed at the strange tidings, comprehending nothing but that my dear love was in sore danger and that I must go to her assistance. But as my head cleared with the long gallop I began to think of what the bad news meant. Rose had been entrapped and carried away. It was a snare meant for no good. Who had done it? Who had done it? Over and over again this question came into my head as we rode forward under the starlit sky.

"Whose hand is this, Will?" asked Philip Lisle at last, just as we came in sight of the lights at Dale's Field. "I did not know that my poor girl had an enemy—nor that I had either, for that matter."

"I cannot understand it," I answered, and said no more, knowing not what to say. And yet there was a suspicion in my mind that I might have spoken of to him if I had

not felt some reluctance in coming to a decision about it. I tried to put it from me, hating even to think evil without due cause, but strive as I would the suspicion grew stronger, and at last I found myself thinking of it seriously.

Captain Trevor—was it his hand that had brought us all this wrong? Do what I would I could not help but suspect him. He had been so frank and courteous, and had seemed so gallant and true a cavalier that it went through my heart to think wrong of him. And yet I knew the ways of some of those fine gentlemen of the Court, how they think that all is fair in love and war, and will stoop to such deceit to win a fair maiden as they would not condescend to for aught else. I knew, too, because of his own confession, that Captain Trevor had conceived a deep passion for Rose, and it seemed to me very possible that absence from her had so strengthened his feelings

as to render him forgetful of honour or of aught else save a desire to win her for himself. But it was hard to believe, for I could not think that one who had experienced so much kindness at the hands of me and mine would repay us by such base ingratitude and black treachery. Where else, however, to look for an explanation of this strange matter I knew not. Of one thing only I was certain, namely, that whoever had thus compassed evil against me and my dear love should pay for it with his blood.

The lights were being extinguished as we rode into the fold at Dale's Field, for it was late, and we were always early to bed at our house. The window of the chamber occupied by Lucy and Rose was dark and cheerless, but there was a glow of light through the window of the kitchen, and we had barely knocked at the door before my mother opened it and gave us admittance.

"My dear," said she, holding me very close in her arms, for I had not seen her for some weeks, "my dear, we had not thought to see you at this time of night! It was only this afternoon that I sent you a letter by the hand of Master Belwether."

"Alas, mother!" I answered, "it is that very letter that hath brought us here."

It was nearly dark in the doorway, and she could not distinguish my companion's face through the gloom, but when I spoke she turned towards him anxiously.

"Who is it that is come with you, Will?" she said.

"It is I, Mistress Dale," answered Philip.

"Master Lisle! Alas, I fear there is something wrong. Let us have a light, Will. I feared something when I heard your step at the door."

I struck a light from the flint that always hung by the hearth, while Philip tied up our horses at the door and threw our rugs

across their steaming backs. The light from the lamp fell on our three anxious faces as we gathered round the dying embers.

"What is it, Will?" asked my mother.

"It is this, dear mother. Here is Master Lisle alive and well, and hath had no hurt whatever of late, so that the men who have carried off Rose to see him have deceived both her and you."

She looked from me to him and from him to me, as if she could hardly understand what I had told her.

"Alas, Master Lisle," she said, "I have been very, very foolish—but, indeed, what were we to think, for the men were so very grave and earnest? and then, again, they brought a letter from yourself, so that we could not choose but believe them."

"The letter, mother; let us see the letter."

"Why, by good chance, Rose left it behind her, though she had at first intended to carry it with her," said my mother, "and

Lucy put it away after she had gone. But indeed, Master Lisle, 'tis so like your own handwriting that you will not wonder we were deceived by it."

Nor did we when we had seen the letter, for it was very cleverly made to imitate Philip's writing, so that we at once knew that whoever had hatched this foul plot was familiar with the man whose daughter it sought to injure. It was but a short letter, saying that Philip Lisle lay sick unto death at a day's journey, and desired his daughter to go to him under care of the two trusty messengers who carried it.

"And these," said my mother, "were two decent-looking serving-men, one of whom told us that he had known Master Lisle a many years, and was with him at the time of his hurt, which had been gotten during a fight with the rebels on the borders of Derbyshire where he now lay dying. And they were both so full of pity for Rose, and

made so many compassionate remarks concerning her father, that we had none of us any suspicion of them, but regarded them as being what they professed to be."

So now we knew all that my mother could tell us, and there was nothing for us to do but resolve upon some plan of action.

"They have three days' start of us," said Philip, sadly. "And the land is wide enough for them to have gone in many a different direction before we can have news of them. However, we must to horse, Will, and do what we can to find my poor girl."

"Which way shall we go?" I asked, feeling almost hopeless, so black did matters look.

"It was nine in the morning when they started out," said my mother, "and they rode southward, going towards Sheffield, whereabouts, they said, Master Lisle lay dying."

"Then towards Sheffield we must ride," said Philip, "asking for tidings of them as we go along. Pray God we may be successful!"

We did not tarry long at Dale's Field, save to eat a hasty meal and to put some food in our saddle-bags, and soon we were in the saddle again and hastening through the night along the Great North Road. The toll-keeper at Barnsdale Bar was hard and fast asleep, but we roused him at last and made inquiry of him as to the three travellers we sought. His brains were somewhat confused at first, but after a while he remembered the three we spoke of, and told us they had gone forward without saying aught to him of their destination. Thus far we were right, and so we continued until we came near Doncaster, several toll-bar men and innkeepers remembering Rose and the two messengers passing that way.

"We are like to spend a good deal of

time without result in Doncaster," said Philip. "There are so many inns in the place, and when we have found the right one there are so many various roads to choose from. How shall we find what road they have taken after passing through here, if indeed they have not turned aside before coming to the town?"

But I thought and said that the men, whatever their design might be, would have taken Rose towards Sheffield for the reason that she knew whither they intended professedly to conduct her and would have become suspicious if they had turned their horses' heads in any other direction. And my conclusions in this matter proved correct, for we had little difficulty in finding news of them at Doncaster, where they had rested to bait their horses, afterwards resuming their journey towards Sheffield by the road that leads past Conisbrough and Rotherham. Along this road, then, we continued

our pursuit, inquiring at every inn and toll-bar for news, which we sometimes got and sometimes failed to procure.

Now, it had been on my mind ever since leaving Dale's Field to tell Philip Lisle of my suspicions respecting Captain Trevor, and I had only been held back from doing so by fear of unjustly coupling an honest man's name with dishonourable conduct. But at last it seemed to me well to let Philip know of all that was in my mind, so when we stayed at Conisbrough to breath our horses I took him aside and unbosomed myself, asking him to tell me candidly what he thought of the matter.

"Alas, Will," said he, "I know not what to think. I know little of this Trevor, except that he hath been a brave officer and was formerly much about the Court in London. But, as thou knowest, these gallants are not always to be trusted, however brave they may be in battle, and 'tis

possible that he hath done this, more especially as you say he conceived some passion for Rose before he left you. Nay, I know not what to say. We can only push our journey forward."

So we went on towards Sheffield, now and then finding some one who remembered the passing of the three we sought. It was now afternoon, and our horses, which had been almost continually on the stretch since ten o'clock of the previous evening, were beginning to show signs of fatigue. We had not put them to any great amount of exertion, for we had spent much time in making inquiry at the roadside inns and toll-bars, but the day was exceeding hot and they had had no proper rest or feed since leaving Pontefract Castle, where their rations had been none of the best for weeks past. At the next wayside inn, then, which stood halfway between Thrybergh and Rotherham, we drew rein and stabled our steeds, after

which we entered the house to find some food for ourselves.

We had hardly entered the kitchen of the inn when I suddenly started with surprise to see Dennis Watson, seated in company with another man, who was evidently a cattle-drover, at a little table near the window. But as I knew that the Watsons did something in the way of cattle-dealing in those parts, I reflected that Dennis was probably there on his own business, and went forward to another part of the kitchen, taking no more notice of him than to give him a cold nod of my head. While Philip and myself were resting and drinking he and the drover completed their business, and the latter, having received some money from Dennis, shortly bade us all good-day and went out. Dennis continued to sit and stare at us, bestowing the greater part of his attention on Philip Lisle, and after a time, when we gave signs of moving, he

came over to the table where we sat and spoke to me.

"I would like to speak a word to you, Master Dale," said he, bending over the table with his eyes fixed on mine.

"You can speak," I said, little caring what he had to say and not desirous of having aught to do with him.

"I don't speak before strangers," said he.

"I have no secrets from my companion," replied I. "And I would just as soon there was some one heard what we have to say, Master Watson."

His face grew dark when I said that, and he stood frowning at us both for a full minute before he spoke again.

"As you like," he said at last. "I only wished to say, Master Dale, that I am sorry for you."

"And for what?" said I, sharply.

"Why, because you have lost your sweetheart."

Now, it did not strike me at first that his words had any special significance, for I thought that he had heard that Rose was gone away and was simply taking occasion of the fact to sneer at me. So I said naught, but sat silent, looking, I dare say, very stupid and sullen.

"I suppose," he continued, "that you two gentlemen are in search of the young lady, and if you are 'tis a pity they have three days' start of you."

"They—who?"

"Mistress Rose and the gay gallant that your good mother nursed back to health. It had been better if she had let him die of his wound, Master Dale."

When he said this all the blood in my body rushed to my heart and thence to my head, and I felt a great singing about my ears as if I were going down in the midst of some whirlpool. And then I shouted, "Liar!" and would have leapt

at Dennis and choked the sneering laugh that rose to his lips, but for Philip Lisle, who laid his hand upon me and restrained me forcibly.

"Let be, Will, let be!" said Philip. "We will soon know whether he be a liar or not. Now, sir," he continued, turning to Dennis, "I am the father of Mistress Rose Lisle, and must ask you to explain yourself further. Where is it that you have seen my daughter, and in whose company?"

"Why, Master Lisle," answered Dennis, "I do not know that I am bound to explain matters to you. However, I am no liar, as Master Dale there would make out. It would be better for him if I were."

"Go on, sir, go on," said Philip.

"Well, then, here I am in this part of the land, buying hogs, as is my custom at this time o' year, as Will Dale there knows. Three days ago I was on the high-road 'twixt here and Sheffield, when I saw four travellers

approach, two of whom rode in front while the other two brought up the rear. I thought I recognized Mistress Rose Lisle as one of the first, and slipped amongst the trees to watch. Mistress Rose it was, and with her, laughing and jesting, the gay cavalier who stayed so long at Dale's Field. The others were decent-looking serving-men of a certain age."

"If you met such on the road, sir, they passed here. The host will remember them. Call him in."

The host did remember such a company. Nay, he remembered more; the young lady came there with the serving-men, and was there met by the cavalier, all four then proceeding southward.

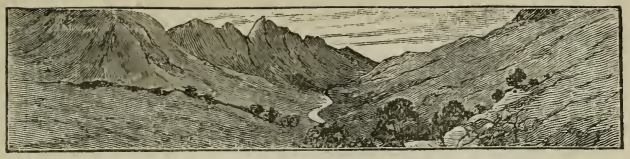
"I am no liar, Master Dale," said Dennis.

We went outside to our horses. What I felt I cannot describe. My heart and brain were on fire. I knew not what to think nor what to do.

"What do you think, what do you think!" I cried to Philip when we were out of the house. "For God's sake say something to me."

"My poor lad, what can I say? Only this, Will, that my dear girl would do naught against honour. She is the victim of some foul plot. Listen. This Trevor hath a country estate in the north of Derbyshire. Let us push on through Sheffield and see if we can find him there."

So we paid our reckoning and rode away in the summer evening, and my heart was as heavy as lead within my breast.



CHAPTER II.

OF OUR ADVENTURE IN DERBYSHIRE.

WE came shortly into Rotherham, where we found men busily engaged in the casting of cannon for the Parliamentarians, and on that account we tarried there but a short time, and succeeded not in learning any news of the party we sought. Neither did we hear much as we passed along the road betwixt that town and Sheffield, for we were now come into a more populous district, and the folks at the inns and toll-bars more than once told us that they had something else to do than observe what manner of travellers passed along the high-

ways. Now and then, indeed, we came across an innkeeper or a toll-bar man who had some vague and misty notion that he remembered the company we described, but the answers of these people were usually so little to be depended upon that we could put no confidence in them.

"There is nothing for it, Will, but to push on towards Trevor's estate, which lieth, I know, somewhere in the Peak country," said Philip Lisle. "We shall most likely find him there, and can then make strict inquiry of him."

"It shall be but a short inquiry," I said meaningly, for I was by that time sure that the man whom we had befriended had wrought me this great wrong, and my heart burned to have him by the throat. "Only let me lay hands upon him and we will have the truth out of him whether he will or no."

"Justice shall be done," said Philip; and

we rode on again in silence, for I had no mind to talk, being chiefly concerned with fierce thoughts of revenge and anger. My brain was on fire with these things, and I think that if Captain Trevor had suddenly appeared before us I should have slain him where he stood, without giving him the chance to beg for mercy.

It was well on in the evening when we came into Sheffield, for during the last few miles our horses had advanced at little more than a foot-pace. The poor beasts, in fact, were in anything but fit condition for a long day's journey, being worn nearly to skin and bone by their privations and long fastings. It was abundantly evident that they could not go further without a rest, for the hour's baiting they had already enjoyed at the wayside inn where we met Dennis Watson, had done little more than spur them on to a brief effort, which was now at an end.

"We must dismount for a few hours,

Will," said Philip, "otherwise our cattle will go dead lame. My poor Cæsar is not so young as he was, and I do not like to distress him. It is now seven o'clock; what say you if we dismount until midnight?"

It seemed a long time to me, for I was raging to push forward anywhere and anyhow, if only I could get news of my dear Rose Lisle, but I knew that we could do no less than he proposed. I had hoped we might get some news of her in Sheffield, but when we rode into it I found it to be a place larger than Pontefract, with many inns, and filled with smoke, coming from the furnaces of workers in iron and steel, so that I cared not how soon we got away from the bad air and clanking hammers.

"Mind what you do or say here, Will," said Philip. "I fear we are amongst Roundheads in this place, and I have no mind to experience such treatment as we met in Pontefract market-place, when old Master

Pratt clapped us into his cellar. I know of a place where they are true to the King, so we will make for that and be safe until our horses are rested."

We accordingly passed through the town, not entirely unobserved, and finally drew rein at a hostelry which stood in a retired situation over against the road which leads from Yorkshire into Derbyshire. Here we found an ancient landlord, who greeted Philip Lisle very cordially and bade us welcome. But neither he nor his could tell us aught of Rose, so we were fain to stable our steeds and sit down to wait with what patience we could. They set meat and drink before us, but neither felt inclined for eating, and I think a mouthful of bread would have choked me. At last, indeed, I grew so restless that I proposed we should go forth and make inquiry at some of the other inns in the town.

"We should surely do as well occupied

in that fashion as sitting here doing naught," said I; "and as for me, I can bear this idleness no longer, and shall go mad if I am not occupied."

"Agreed," said Philip; and we set out into the town and proceeded as cautiously as possible to make inquiries at such inns as travellers usually put up at. No news, however, did we hear, and received many a scolding for our foolishness in asking folks to remember what had happened four days before. They had too much to do, said all that we spoke to, to remember every stray party that paused to water their horses. So we did no good in that direction, and presently returned to our own inn, which we left shortly after midnight, the horses being somewhat recovered by their rest and rations.

It was a bright moonlight night, and the country to the west, which we were now traversing, rapidly assumed shapes and forms

with which until then I had never been familiar. The ground began to rise until it was shaped in high hills, more or less steep, with long valleys, now wooded and now barren, winding away between them. To my eyes, which had never seen aught higher than the hills at Brayton and Hambleton, nor any valley wider than that of Went, this scenery was very awful, and brought over me a curious feeling of admiration and wonder. It was so silent and lonely, with no sound save the clank of our horses' feet, or the clatter of our swords against the stirrup-irons, and the clouds that floated over the moonlit hills looked so weird and ghostly, that I could almost have imagined myself in some of the fairy haunts that I had heard folks talk about.

Through these dales and over the passes that cross the surrounding hills, we rode for some hours until we had climbed over Derwent Edge, and were drawing near to

the country round the Peak. Here the hills assumed rougher and wilder shapes, and the valleys became deeper and darker. Presently the road along which we had ridden became less well defined, and we found ourselves traversing what was little more than a bridle-path that wound up and down the hillsides. It was now morning, and the sun was rising above the hills to the westward, and our horses once more began to show signs of fatigue. However, I could see nothing in the shape of human habitation whichever way I turned.

"It seems as if we had lost our way," I said, drawing rein until Philip Lisle came abreast of me. "The path grows narrower and narrower, and bids fair to be lost altogether presently."

"I have been this way once before," said he, pulling up his horse and looking round, "and it runs in my mind that there is a farmstead close by. Let us push on

over yonder hill and see if we cannot discover it."

When we came to the top of the high ground he had pointed out, the farmstead lay exactly beneath us—a lonely and desolate-looking group of buildings, round which I could see no sign of life. On the steep hillsides that rose about it a few mountain sheep strayed hither and thither, but there were no cattle in the valley, and no smoke came from the chimneys of the house.

"It looks as if its inhabitants were all gone to the wars, Will," said Philip Lisle, as we descended the hillside and drew near to the house. "Nevertheless, it shall go hard with us if we cannot find something for our horses. This used to be a house of call for travellers twenty years ago."

When we came up to the door of the house and knocked loudly thereon we received no answer for some time, and were thus obliged to come to the conclusion that

the place was deserted, which idea was strengthened when we saw that the farm-yard was empty, and that there was no fodder in any of the barns or sheds. The out-buildings, indeed, were falling to pieces, the damp and the dry rot having conspired to finish them off, both inside and out. From what we could see of the house through the dirty windows it was in a similar state, and looked as if it had no tenants other than rats, mice, and vermin.

We were turning away from this uninviting place when we heard the sound of a bolt being withdrawn from its staple, followed by the rattling of a chain, and presently the door was opened to us by a tall old man who looked more like a wild animal than a human being, so fiercely did his eyes glare through the knotted and tangled mass of hair which grew all over his face. He was clothed in little better than rags, and his arms and feet were bare, while his shoulders

—which he shrugged as if he were cold, though it was a fine warm summer morning —were covered with a sheep-skin rudely dressed, and left with the feet and tail still hanging to it.

"God save you, master!" said Philip, drawing nearer to the door. "This was a house of call, an I mistake not, in former days."

"Yes, yes," said the old man, whose fierce eyes were examining our persons and our horses as if he had never seen aught like us before. "Yes, yes; do your horses want a feed? I am very poor, but there is a little corn in the stables."

"Then they shall have it," said Philip. "Come, Will, let us dismount. The cattle will be all the better for an hour's rest. Your homestead does not seem to be in very good condition, master," he continued as the old man went before into the stable. "What hath happened here of late?"

"It was robbed, robbed," piped the old man in his cracked voice. "Those Roundhead knaves sacked it of all I had—grain and straw. Pray God ye be not of their following!"

"Nay, we are for the King," said Philip, "and will pay handsomely for whatever we eat. Have you no food or drink for us, master, as well as for our horses?"

"There is a little ale, just a little," said the old man, "and some cheese and bread, if that will content you, gentlemen. Once upon a time travellers fared well with me, but, alas! I have naught left for myself nowadays, save yonder two or three sheep which I am too infirm to catch."

While we had been talking he had led the way to a stable which was somewhat less dilapidated than the rest of the buildings, and was fairly well fitted with two stalls, in which we placed our horses. This done, he produced a feed of corn for each from a bin

that stood in the corner, afterwards going before us back to the house.

"Come in, noble gentlemen, come in," said he as we reached the threshold. "'Tis a poor place, but if you will pass through the kitchen you will find a parlour more suited to your quality. 'Tis indeed the only apartment in the house where I can entertain you, for all else hath been cleared off."

We went through the desolate-looking kitchen into a smaller apartment, wherein the sole furniture consisted of a deal table and two or three rough chairs.

"Marry!" quoth Philip. "You seem to have fallen on sore times, friend, of late years."

"Yes, yes," said the old man. "Yes, sore indeed—but you need refreshment, gentlemen. I will bring you what I have. It is not often that travellers pass this way nowadays."

He presently returned and set before us

a platter of bread and cheese and a great jug of ale, the sight of which was not unwelcome to us, sharp set as we were by our long ride through the night.

"You have a deep cellar, master," said Philip, tossing off his pot at a draught. "Your ale is cold as an icicle."

"Ay," said the old man, "deep enough, but poorly furnished, sir, since all these troubles came upon me."

"Ay," said Philip, "these be troublous times, 'tis true. Tell us, master, do you know where the estate of one Captain Trevor, an officer in His Majesty's forces, lieth? It is somewhat near the Peak, so I have heard, and we are now in that neighbourhood, if I mistake not."

"Yes," answered the old man, "you are now at the foot of the Peak, and Squire Trevor's estate lieth before you at a distance of seven miles. Follow this bridle-path along the valley until you come to the road

again, and then ride straight on till you reach the park gates."

"Have you seen aught of Captain Trevor lately?" inquired Philip. "Is he much seen in these parts?"

"Nay," said the old man, "not since the war began, gentlemen. But I see you have drunk all the ale—shall I fetch you another stoupful?"

"Why," said Philip, "I am certainly thirsty this morning, so fill up again, master, and then you might give our horses a drink of water. I dare say the poor brutes are as dry as their riders."

We continued eating and drinking while the old man went out to the stables. I ate little, being in no frame of mind for food, but I had grown strangely thirsty since leaving my horse, and took deep draughts of the ale, which was cool and refreshing.

"Beshrew me, Will," said Philip Lisle, suddenly, "I have turned vastly sleepy since

we halted. My eyes keep winking against my will."

"So do mine," I answered. "I have nodded more than once since we sat down. 'Tis the long ride through the fresh air."

"Bethink thee, lad," said he, "we have had no sleep these two nights. 'Tis hard work to go without sleep, and ride all the time too. Indeed, I could lay my head down on this table and be off in——"

Now before he had finished speaking he leaned forward, and, resting his head on his arms, dropped suddenly off into a sound slumber. I leaned my head against the wall and watched him. There was a bee humming outside. Its monotonous buzz, buzz, buzz, sounded pleasantly in my ears. My eyes closed gently, and I was suddenly as sonnd asleep in my corner of the wall as Philip Lisle with his head on the table.

How long we slept I cannot tell, but I suddenly woke with a start to find myself

lying on the floor of the little room. It was evidently night, for the light had gone, and through the window I could see a star peeping over the top of the hill which towered up above the house. My head ached in terrible fashion, and my eyes, having once opened, continued to blink at the starlight while my senses were collecting themselves. I suddenly tried to raise my hand to my head. It was fast bound to my side! and the other was similarly secured. Then my senses came back to me rapidly enough and I saw what fools we had been. The old man had drugged us, and bound us while we slept, probably to rob and murder us for the sake of our horses and our money.

I tried to move and found that I was securely fastened at shoulders, waist, and feet. I could do naught but roll about, and I turned over hoping to strike against Philip in the darkness. I had heard him breathing when my senses came back to me, and con-

cluded that he must be somewhere near me and in like plight to myself. But I had not taken more than two rolls across the floor in the direction in which I fancied him to be, when I heard sounds outside the window which made me hold my breath and lay as motionless as a log of timber.

CHAPTER III.

OF OUR FORTUNATE MEETING WITH CAPTAIN TREVOR.

THE noise I heard outside the house was caused by the trampling of a horse's feet on the pavement in front of the door, followed by the jingling of steel and harness as the rider alighted. Then came the sound of footsteps on the threshold, and a man's voice said, "Hollo, there; what, is the old knave asleep?"

"Nay, nay, noble captain, nay; did you ever know me to fall asleep when there was grist to bring to the mill? But speak low, captain dear, for there is somewhat inside that must not be waked."

"Ah, and what is it this time, Benny? A fine, fat Sheffield merchant? Will he bleed well?"

"Nay, nay," quavered the old man. "'Tis two of those accursed Cavaliers—Heaven's malediction be upon all of their sort!—that came wandering by this morning."

"Ah! and drank of thy ale, eh, Benny?"

"Yes, and deeply, I assure you. Oh, I made it strong enough. But now hark ye, captain dear, there are two of them, and one is a great giant of a fellow, yea, head and shoulders taller than Long Dick, but more wooden-headed, I warrant, for he never spoke a word and let his companion do all the talking—oh, a great fellow, but stupid enough."

"Ay, and the other?"

"Why, the other is an ordinary being, and methinks I have seen him before, somewhere. Perhaps it was——"

"Ay, but hast drawn their teeth, Benny?"

"Yes, indeed, captain dear, oh yes. Their swords and pistols are safe stowed, I warrant you."

"Well, and the booty? You searched them, of course, when they were safe and sound?"

"Yes, and bound," said the old man. "The great man had thirty guineas in a bag, and a breeches pocket full of crown pieces; and the other had twenty guineas, but no silver. Then there are their horses safely bestowed in the stable, and their trappings, and the men's clothes and arms, so that old Benny hath not done so bad a day's work, eh, captain?"

"Excellent, Benny, excellent. And the money, my cock of Egypt, where hast bestowed it?"

"In the usual place, captain dear; oh, in the usual place," said the old villain, with so much craft and subtlety in his voice that I could almost see his rascally old eyes

glinting and gleaming through his white hair.

"Well, but what are we to do with the fellows, Benny?" asked the other man. "The usual thing—four inches of cold steel, and drop them into the well?"

"I should have done it before now," said the old man; "but the big man is too heavy for me to drag, and then I might have been seen from the hillsides. Shall we do it now, captain dear?"

"Why, is there any hurry, Benny? Will the fellows wake soon?"

"Not they," laughed the old man. "Not this side of Doomsday, I warrant me."

"Why, then, let me eat and drink, Benny, and then we will do the necessary deed. Besides, there is Long Dick coming up the valley, and he can bear us a hand if need be. So set out meat and drink, my Trojan, while I stable my steed. Fifty guineas, quotha? 'Tis well, Benny, excellent well."

Then the sound of horse's feet went across the yard, and I heard the old man moving about with pots and pans in some apartment next to our own. As for me, a great sweat had sprung out all over me when I heard these bloody murderers so calmly discussing our fate. What was to be done? There I was, tied hand and foot so that I could not move, and Philip Lisle lay still sound asleep at my side, equally powerless with myself. If only I could have freed myself from the ropes which bound me, I would have risen and gone forth, and then and there screwed the old man's head round until his further chance of maltreating travellers had been gone. But there I was, big enough and strong enough to fight three men of ordinary size, and yet helpless as a child because my arms were tied.

Presently the other man came back from stabling his horse, and I heard the two conversing in low tones in the next room. I

heard, also, the clatter of dishes, and wished fervently that the food would choke them both. I thought of all manner of things in those dreadful moments—of my mother, of Rose, of Jack Drumbleforth and Jacob Trusty, of Lucy and Ben Tuckett, and of matters which had happened many a year before and had been forgotten until then. I could see no possible way of escape. Presently the men would come in, and run their knives into us, with no more compunction than if we had been sheep, and after that they would throw us into the old well, and leave us to rot. I would have given all I had in the world for the use of my arms at that terrible moment.

After what seemed a long time I heard another horse enter the yard in front, and presently a third voice was joined to the two already engaged in conversation. Then the sweat came out on my brow in great beads, and at every sound as of feet coming

our way I trembled with anger and helpless rage. I strained at the cords that bound me, and felt them nip the flesh beneath.

And then an idea suddenly flashed across my mind like a ray of hope. I remembered once being at Doncaster Fair, and watching a man of enormous strength who was showing the people what he could do with his muscles and sinews. First of all he lifted weights, such as bars of iron and lead, and after that he swung heavy clubs about as if they had been mere willow wands. But what the people most admired was the following trick: the man produced a long strand of rope, and bound it tightly round his chest, after which he drew a deep breath, and then, sending out his chest to its full extent, he snapped the rope as if it had been a bit of straw or a woman's strand of worsted.

Now, I was at that time as strong and mighty of muscle and sinew as any man of

the age, and I knew that for every pound the strong man at the fair could lift, I could lift two. And at this terrible moment it occurred to me that now was the time to put forth my great strength and burst the bonds that bound me, so that I might at least have a blow at the villains in the next room before they threw me and my companion into the well.

I contracted my chest and arms as far as I could, and then suddenly expanded them so that the rope cracked again under the pressure. But, alas! there were more strands than one, and they cut into the thick part of my arms so cruelly that I almost cried out with pain. Nevertheless, I was spurred on to make another effort by the voices in the next room, so I drew breath once more, and once more tried to burst the bonds that bound me. I strove and strove and strove until the fire flashed from my eyes, and my chest was like to

split, while the straining cords cut into my arms till the blood started and the sweat poured down my face. And then with one last effort the rope snapped sharply, and I sank back exhausted but free.

But there was no time for rest, and I immediately set to work to untie the bonds which confined my feet. This done, I crept over to where Philip Lisle lay asleep, and hastened to release him also. He was so soundly wrapped in slumber that all my tugging at his bonds and rolling him about did not suffice to wake him, and I did not dare to shout in his ear lest the men should hear me. So I withdrew him into the darkest part of the room, and then stole stealthily over to the door, with the intention of crushing the life out of the first man who entered. I had not stood there many minutes when I heard very soft footfalls approach the door, which was presently unbolted from the outside and then gently

opened to the extent of two or three inches. I held my breath and waited, yet my heart thumped so violently against my ribs, that I feared it would be heard. However, my hands and arms were ready, and my fingers twitched to be at somebody's throat.

Then the door was opened a little wider, and I heard the old man whispering as if to some one behind him.

"Fast asleep, captain dear, fast asleep! Don't you hear how regularly they breathe? Aha, what a nice sleep they'll have at the bottom of the old well, eh? You made the knife sharp enough, captain dear?"

"Sharp as a needle," growled the other man. "Go in, Benny, and get it over."

"Oh yes," whispered the old villain. "Oh yes, I'm going. Do you hear them breathing, eh? Like children. Eh, eh, eh, how the warm blood will bubble under old Benny's knife, captain dear! Eh——, sh—

sh, my children—sh, here's old Benny with his——"

As he came stealthily round the door I seized him by the throat and drove his head straight and true against the stone wall behind. I felt the skull crack under my hand, and the man's body fell limp and lifeless at my feet, without ever a sound passing his lips. Then I caught the glittering knife from him as he fell, and turned on the other two men, who were crowding into the doorway after him, and whose forms I could just make out in the dim light. As I struck out at them they fell back into the kitchen through which we had passed in the morning, and I, following them up with my weapon, was upon them before they could reach the door. But here I lost the knife, which I drove into the doorpost with such force that I could not withdraw it. By that time, however, they had opened the door, and we all three went rolling out on the

stone pavement with a hideous clatter. But I was topmost, and before they could rise I had each by the throat and was wondering if I could manage to squeeze the life out of both of them at the same time.

Now, they were both big men and of brawny build, and they no sooner found my hands at their throats than they began to fight desperately for their lives, so that one of them presently forced my hand away from his neck and strove to regain his feet. But my wits were now thoroughly at work, and as this man forced my hand away, I raised his fellow-villain's head with the other hand and gave it such a knock against the stones that it cracked like an eggshell, and the man stiffened out and lay still. The one who had thought himself free had meanwhile drawn a knife, and I rose just in time to escape a blow aimed at my back. He came at me again as I got to my feet, but there fortunately lay close to hand a thick

bar that had once been used as a swingle-tree, and with this I laid about the fellow's head and shoulders to such purpose that he suddenly dropped his knife and ran howling for mercy towards the hills.

So now the fight was over, and it had all happened in very much less time than it has taken me to write down this account of it. I went into the house, and finding a lamp burning in a room where the men had evidently been eating their supper, carried it to Philip, who, sleeping amidst all the noise and clatter, had just begun to wake up and rub his eyes.

"Beshrew me, Will!" said he, as I bent over him with the lamp, "I fear I have slept a longer time than I thought to. Where are we, and what am I doing on the floor?"

"Wake up, sir," said I, impatiently. "We have been drugged and wellnigh murdered, and we have lost a whole day."

He was on his feet in an instant then, and

listened attentively while I told him what had happened. Then he took and shook my hand very earnestly.

"Well done, Will, well done indeed!" said he. "Alas! I am much to blame. We ought to have been more cautious of that old man. But let us have a look at our enemies."

As for the old man, he was dead enough, and I could not for the life of me feel sorry for him, so villainous and crafty had been his conduct towards us. The other fellow lying outside was in bad case too, but not dead, so we lifted him inside the house and put him into a comfortable position, after which we left him and began to hunt for our money, finding it after considerable search hidden under a flag in the cellar. This done, we made for the stables, and lost no time in saddling our horses, for we were both impressed with the idea that there might be more of these murderers, and

that the third fellow had fled to seek assistance.

When we led the horses out of the stable and mounted them at the gate, the moon had just risen and the valley was full of clear, silver light. We were about to ride away when we suddenly caught the sound of horsemen advancing along a bridle-path that lay to the west. Soon we heard the sound of voices, mingling with the clank of bit and stirrup, so that we felt sure there was a troop of horse upon us.

"Draw behind the wall, Will, and let them go by," said Philip. "If they are of our own party we will hail them; if not, we will let them go in peace."

So we drew behind the wall of the granary, and the troop came along at a smart walk, and we heard the men laughing and talking.

"Old Benny's farmstead," said one of the foremost, "is going to rack and ruin. Let us whistle him out."

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"Nay," said another, "let the old fox sleep in his hole. I had as lief set eyes on the devil as on his evil face."

"Forward, lads, forward!" cried a voice from the rear. "We are not making such speed as we ought. Trooper Baxendale, lead on a little faster."

Now, I had no sooner heard that voice than I gave a great start, and would have leaped forward if Philip Lisle had not held me with a strong hand. For the voice was the voice of Captain Trevor. "Silence, Will, silence!" whispered Philip. "Do naught rashly. Leave it to me and command thyself. See, here he comes."

And looking out from the barn wall we saw Captain Trevor distinctly enough in the moonlight, as he rode at the tail of his little troop of twenty men. He passed by us, and then Philip rode out into the lane and hailed him.

"Hola! Captain Trevor."

He turned sharply and stared in our direction, and his men drew rein and the horses stopped and stood champing their bits.

"Who calls?" said he, as we drew nearer.

"'Tis I, your old acquaintance, Philip Lisle, and here is with me Will Dale."

"Master Lisle—and Will Dale, my dear Will Dale! Gentlemen, indeed I cannot think what brings you into this wild region, but 'tis for my better fortune, I am sure."

And he leapt from his horse and came hastening to take our hands, and I knew, and was glad to know it, that the terrible suspicion we had fostered against him was groundless. But since he was innocent, who was it that was guilty?

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE END OF OUR SEARCH.

"ALAS, Will!" whispered Philip, as Captain Trevor approached us, "we are on the wrong track. This man is innocent enough. We have been fooled somewhere."

"And what brings you here, gentlemen?" asked Captain Trevor, shaking hands with both. "Are you on some similar mission to my own? I am taking a troop of horse to Newark—'tis my first adventure, Master Dale, since I left you."

"Alas!" said Philip, "we are on a sad adventure indeed, and just now our prospects

look black enough. However, there is one load off our minds, as you shall hear;" and he forthwith proceeded to give an account of all that had befallen us from the time that Belwether brought us the bad news to Pontefract Castle even to that moment.

Now, while he spoke Captain Trevor gave evidence of the keenest interest and of the liveliest indignation, and when Philip Lisle told him of our meeting with Dennis Watson, and of what Dennis had said respecting him, his face flushed and his hand grasped the hilt of his sword, in a way that boded no good to his false accuser.

"But you believed him not, gentlemen?" he said earnestly. "I trust you believed him not. And yet why have you come here if you did not believe him? Alas, gentlemen, I should have thought you had known me better than to believe me guilty of such black conduct!"

"Sir," said I, "let me tell you that in

my heart I did not believe it, but there were two witnesses against you and we were bound to satisfy ourselves in justice to ourselves and to you. Besides, we thought it possible that some terrible mistake had arisen."

"Yes, yes," said he; "but, oh, gentlemen, it is you who have made a terrible mistake. Can you not see, Master Dale, that the man who so falsely accused me is the man who hath wrought this mischief?"

"Dennis Watson?"

"Dennis Watson of a surety. Did I not hear, when I was at Dale's Field, that he was your enemy and had more than once vowed to do you an injury? Rest assured, Master Dale, that it is he who hath planned and carried out this matter."

Then I saw what fools we had been, and how easily Dennis Watson had duped us, and I swore a great oath that whenever he and I next met, whether in highway or

byway, street or market-place, in church or court, there one of us two should go forth no more. And that oath I kept, even as God willed it.

"And now, gentlemen," said Captain Trevor, "you must back to yonder wayside inn that you spoke of, for it is there that you will find the key to this mystery. Yea, I am convinced that the host who bore out Watson's statement is implicated with him in this plot against you. Now, it will not be so much out of our way to go with you, for we can make Newark by way of Retford, so mount, gentlemen, and let us push on."

"But these men?" said I, pointing towards the farmstead, which now stood white and clear in the moonlight. "Shall we not see to the one that is living?"

"Nay," said Trevor, "his companion will presently return when he sees us ride away, and we have no time to attend to cut-throats. I have long known that this gang needed

stamping out, Master Dale, and am obliged to you for what you have done. So now let us away."

And with that we got into our saddles and departed, soon leaving the ruined farmstead far behind; and from that day to this I have never heard whether the man died or whether he recovered, nor did I much care, considering what trouble of mind he and his companions had put me to.

We rode along through the valleys between the hills during the whole of that night, and came into sight of Sheffield about six o'clock in the morning. But into Sheffield Captain Trevor would not go, because it was principally in the hands of the Parliamentarians, and we therefore took a roundabout direction southwards of the town, and went towards Rotherham by way of Beauchief Abbey and the villages of Woodhouse and Whiston. At Rotherham we stayed to bait our horses, it being then almost noon

and the march having lasted nearly twelve hours. Here we heard news of His Majesty's success at Leicester, which was communicated to us by a messenger going north from Newark. Here, too, we learnt that the King had expressed his hopes of shortly achieving a great victory over the Roundheads, which hopes, however, were unfulfilled, for the battle of Naseby, which took place a few days later, routed the Royalist army for ever.

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon when we left Rotherham and proceeded along the highway in the direction of Thrybergh. The wayside inn where we had seen Dennis Watson lay halfway between these two places, and it was not long before we came in sight of it and drew up to confer amongst ourselves as to what plan of action we should pursue.

"Leave it to me," said Captain Trevor. "If matters are as I suspect, I will bring

them to a successful ending. Do you, gentlemen, lie behind a little, while I and my men ride forward. We will call for drink, and while we are busy with our tankards at the inn-door you will ride up and presently begin to soundly rate the landlord for falsely directing you the other day. After which leave matters to me."

Acting upon this advice, we let Captain Trevor and his men ride on until they came to the door of the inn, where they were presently waited upon by the host, whom we took to be the man that had lied to us two days previously. This person brought out to them stoups of liquor, and while he stood at the door waiting their pleasure, Philip and I rode forward and suddenly made our appearance between him and the troopers. And we had no sooner drawn rein than I perceived that the fellow instantly recognized us, for he changed colour and gave a sharp backward look

over his shoulder, as though he contemplated a retreat into the inn.

"How now, sirrah!" cried Philip. "A fine dance you have given us with your false news. You shall account to us pretty heavily for it, I promise you."

"I know not what your worship means," stammered the man, beginning to look very much afraid.

"What, hast thou the impudence to say so? Hark ye, sirrah, did not my friend here and myself call at your house for refreshment but two days ago?"

"Yes, sir, yes, certainly."

"And did we not make inquiry of thee, and didst thou not affirm that a young gentleman and his two servants had lately met a young lady at this inn and gone forward with her?"

"Yes, your worship, but 'twas only truth."

"Hah, truth, quotha! And did not

Dennis Watson that was here at the time, and whom I doubt not thou knowest over well, did he not tell us in thy hearing that the young gentleman was one Captain Trevor?"

"I believe Master Watson did say so," faltered the man. "Yes, I remember it very well."

"Then thou liest, villain, and so did he," struck in Captain Trevor, "for I am the man he spoke of, and it is months since I rode by thy rascally dwelling. And I would have you know, sirrah, that I am a magistrate and bear the King's commission to put down naughty conduct such as thine."

Now, when the man heard this he began to shake somewhat, but presently plucking up courage he replied that he feared naught, having done no wrong, and that there was law to protect him as well as another.

"As to what Master Watson said," he

continued, "what have I to do with it? Did I mention Captain Trevor's name? Marry, I never heard it before this day. What I said, gentlemen, was out of my own knowledge, nor do I know whether what Master Watson said be true or not!"

"Master innkeeper," said Captain Trevor, "thou art a pitiful liar and a knave. Now, we will tell thee for thy further information that there hath lately been a young lady kidnapped, whose friends we are, come hither to avenge her. And so we are like to have the truth out of thee, master innkeeper, for we think thou knowest something of this matter."

Now, the man by that time was very much affrighted and began to shake in his limbs, but once more plucking up courage, he answered that he knew naught of kidnapping and was not to be bullied by any man.

"What, dost dare answer me, a King's

officer!" cried Captain Trevor. "Here, men, dismount and seize him."

"'Tis at your peril!" said the man, struggling violently to free himself from the clutches of the two stalwart troopers who had seized him on either side. "You have no warrant to lay hands on me."

"Warrant or no warrant, thou wilt find we shall treat thee as we please," said Captain Trevor. "Come, sirrah, tell us presently what you know of this Watson that conspired with you here. And speak trippingly, or we will find means to help your tongue."

"You dare not use violence," said the man, half struggling between fear of us and defiance of our presence.

"Dare not? Friend, thou knowest not what thou art saying."

"There is law for me as well as anybody," said the man.

"Yea, and we are come to execute it.

We will be counsel and jury and judge all in one. Now come, sirrah, speak."

But the man did naught but shake his head and grumble, whereat Captain Trevor bade them bind his eyes and tie him to his own pump, at the same time ordering his troopers to make ready their pistols.

"For indeed," said he, with a roguish wink of the eye in our direction, "we shall be forced to resort to extreme measures, master landlord, unless you speak without more delay."

Now, the innkeeper's wife, who had been washing or baking at the rear of the house, at last came to the conclusion that there was something wrong at her front door, wherefore she left her work, and came upon us just as the men were fastening up the protesting landlord to the pump. And she, seeing him blindfolded, and the men standing around him with pistols in their hands, immediately set up such a

screaming that the horses began to rear and prance.

"Ah!" said Captain Trevor, "there is a more powerful instrument than any we have used so far. Come, mistress, an you would not see your husband slaughtered before your eyes, tell him to speak."

"Oh, speak, good Gregory, speak, good, kind Gregory. Oh, masters, spare him! Gregory, dost not hear, thou wooden-head? Alack-a-day, I knew thou wouldst cause ill out of yond business, only thou wouldst not hearken to me. Did I not say 'twas a shame and a sin—and as sweet and gentle a young lady as ever breathed?"

"Take off the bandage," said Captain Trevor. "Come, Master Gregory, we would hear something further about this young lady. Speak out, man."

Now, the landlord, having darted a glance at his spouse which boded her no good, stood angrily regarding us until a trooper

lifted his pistol to his forehead and touched the trigger, whereupon he suddenly said that he would lead us to where the young lady was if we would molest him no further.

"As to that we will promise naught," said Captain Trevor, "for thou art in our power. Tie him up with your halter, Trooper Whiteman, and drive him wherever he wants us to go."

Upon this the man set off surlily enough, and we followed him, Philip and myself anxious and eager now that we knew Rose was near at hand. The innkeeper turned into the meadow at the rear of his house, and crossing it led us into a thick belt of wood where the only path was a narrow one, so that we were bound to ride in single file.

"Come hither, gentlemen," said Captain Trevor, dismounting and taking up a position by our prisoner. "This fellow shall tell us what he knows. Now, sirrah, speak plainly."

Thus adjured, the man confessed, with much reluctance, that himself and another, instigated by Dennis Watson, had brought away a young lady from Dale's Field, and had secured her in a lonely house beyond the belt of wood we were now approaching, where she had since been guarded by the other man and his wife.

"But indeed, gentlemen," he said in conclusion, "indeed there hath no harm befallen the maiden, and no insult hath been offered her. Of a surety I should not have meddled with the matter if there had been aught evil. Nay, Master Watson did warrant us 'twas naught but a love affair, and that he was rescuing the young lady——"

"Hold thy tongue, sirrah!" commanded Captain Trevor. "A villainous pack are ye all, and shall be punished soundly for your pains. Is yond the house thou speak'st of, sirrah?"

The man answered humbly enough that

it was, and we filed out of the wood and went across a clearing towards it. But we had not gotten within fifty paces of it when one of our vanguard cried out that there was a man escaping from the house into the fields beyond, and at the same moment another announced the flight of a woman in another direction.

"'Tis Tom Porter and his wife," said our guide. "They have seen us coming and are fleeing for their lives."

"A crown piece to the men who first lay hands on them," said Captain Trevor, and forthwith the leading troopers went galloping over hedge and ditch after the fugitives, while the rest of us went on to the house.

And now I need hardly tell you with what joy Philip Lisle and myself found our dear Rose, who was busy unfastening the door when we reached the house, her gaolers having left her when they saw us approach-

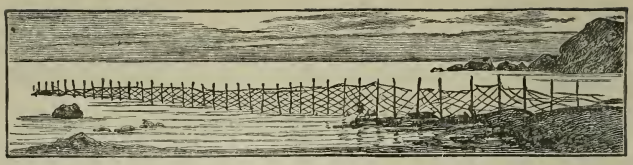
ing. Then our terrible anxiety was relieved, for she hastened to assure us that she was no worse for her adventures, and had kept up her courage by telling herself that we should ere long come to her assistance.

Now, by that time the soldiers had brought back the man and woman, and Captain Trevor and I went out to them, leaving Rose with her father.

"What shall we do with these knaves, Master Dale?" said Captain Trevor. "We cannot whip the woman, so let her go, men. But as for you, master innkeeper, and you, master innkeeper's brother villain, we will make you dance to such a tune as you ne'er heard before."

And with that he caused his men to tie the two men up to a stout oak, one on each side, and having stripped them to their waists, the troopers gave them such a sound thrashing with their halters that the wood re-echoed with their unheeded cries for

mercy. But I regretted very deeply that Dennis Watson was not there to settle his account with me, which I would have exacted of him in a still more stringent fashion.



CHAPTER V.

OF OUR VISIT TO CASTLE HILL.

WHEN we had sufficiently rewarded master innkeeper and his companion in villainy according to their several deserts, we thought it time to be moving on our way, and one of the troopers fetched Rose's horse from the inn, where it had been stabled during her imprisonment. So presently Philip Lisle brought her forth, ready for the ride, and we departed, assuring the two men whom we left tied to the tree that we had not yet done with them, but would see that the law punished them for their naughtiness in proper fashion.

"And as to your master and instigator," said Captain Trevor, "tell him, when he returns hither, that it will be an ill day for him if we come across his path. For what we have done to you is naught to what we will do to him."

Now, I was in fiery haste to return to Dale's Field, because the men had told us in response to our questions that Dennis Watson had gone homewards only that morning, promising to return in two days at the latest. When I heard that, I was resolved to seek him at his own place, and there settle matters between us once for all, and with this object in view I spurred on my companions so that I might get the business over. Captain Trevor, however, was of opinion that the best way to catch Dennis was to wait for him at the point where we then were, because, said he, the villain was certain to return to that place, whereas he might get wind of our coming

to Castle Hill and give us the slip. But I was not willing to take this counsel, arguing rather that it would be better to proceed straight to the Watsons' farmstead, where Dennis would certainly be found that day. So we proceeded towards Doncaster, to which town Captain Trevor and his men accompanied us, and as we journeyed thither Rose told us of how she had fared since the day she left Dale's Field, which history did but serve to increase my great anger against Dennis Watson.

When the two serving-men, who were none other than the villains we had just whipped in the wood, presented themselves at Dale's Field with the letter from her father, Rose had not seen reason for doubting their word, for the letter was cunningly made to represent Philip Lisle's handwriting, and the two men wore a sober and seemly air and spoke of Philip with much solicitude and regard. This appearance of concern

for him they kept up, she said, as they accompanied her along the road, telling her how he fared, and giving her many false accounts of how he had come by his hurt. For they said that he had come over from Lancashire with certain troops, and had been engaged in a skirmish with the Roundheads near the place where they professed him to be lying wounded, together with much more falsely invented matter, put into their heads, no doubt, by the cunning and malice of Dennis Watson. And at all this news she had no suspicion aroused, because she did not know of her father's whereabouts, none of us having heard from him or Jack Drumbleforth for some time. Moreover, the two men were so civil in their behaviour and so constant in their professions of regard for Philip Lisle that she felt perfectly safe in their company, and was even thankful to them for the care they took of her during the journey.

"Alas!" quoth Captain Trevor at this part of Rose's story. "An I had known this, Mistress Rose, an hour ago, we would have given the smooth-tongued knaves a dozen extra stripes apiece. I cannot abear your foxy villains that say fine things to your face and are plotting against you in their hearts. However, we made their backs smart."

All went well, continued Rose, until they reached the wayside inn between Thrybergh and Rotherham, which was towards the end of the afternoon. When they had come to this point they informed her that the house where her father lay was now close at hand, and that they would stable their horses at the inn, and then conduct her to it across the fields. Even then she had felt no suspicion, and followed the men with confidence to the house in the wood. When they were at the door, one of the men, namely, the innkeeper, retired, and the other

took her inside and put her in charge of the woman. Rose now wished to be taken immediately to her father, but the woman put her off with the excuse that he had fallen into a deep slumber, from which he must not be disturbed at that time. After this she conducted Rose to an apartment and left her, promising to fetch her to the sick man as soon as he should give signs of waking. The woman, however, had no sooner gone away from the chamber than the door opened and Dennis Watson appeared before her.

Now, it did not at first so much surprise Rose to see Dennis, because she thought that he had chanced to be in the neighbourhood and had been made aware of her father's condition, and she therefore immediately made inquiry of him as to Philip Lisle's health. He answered this question by assuring her that so far as he knew her father's health was in the best of conditions,

and begged her to forgive him for the trick he had played upon her in order to bring about that meeting. For he was, he protested, dying with love for her, and believing that all things were fair in love and war, he had not scrupled to resort to stratagem to secure her. After which he renewed his professions and besought her to fly with him out of the country.

Now, when Rose fully understood how she had been served, her indignation rose to such a height that she told her mind very plainly to the villain before her, and informed him that she now knew him to be a liar and a very sorry knave, finally commanding him to stand out of her path and let her go out of his presence, which did but offend her. At which, she continued, he grew very red with passion and altered his tune, threatening her as much as he had formerly coaxed her. For she must remember, he said, that there was no help for her, because she was entirely

in his power, and could count on help from no earthly being. Wherefore he bade her consider matters afresh, and then retired, locking the door behind him, so that she was a prisoner. In this way she continued until the next day, seeing no one but the woman of the house, who brought her food and waited upon her, and whom she tried to bribe with promises of reward, but with no effect. Nevertheless, she did not lose heart, knowing right well that her friends would come to rescue her sooner or later.

The next day, Dennis again appeared before her, and again made many protestations of his passion for her, to which she answered that his actions gave the lie to his words. After that he again resorted to threats, which she scorned as before, telling him that she did not fear him and promising him, moreover, sound punishment for his misdeeds. This caused him to withdraw again, having first told her that she should

be kept in close confinement until she was more reasonably disposed towards him. In this way the succeeding days passed, Rose being strictly guarded by the man and his wife, while Dennis appeared at least once a day to plead his evil cause, hoping that the imprisonment would eventually break his captive's resolution. But though Rose became anxious and concerned, she did not cease to rate him soundly for his misdeeds, and upon the day previous to our arrival, she let him know how much she abhorred and despised him; whereupon he swore an oath that he would use foul means if he could do naught with fair, and bade her take two days to decide whether she could give him no better answer. After which he left the house, telling the men that he was going to Castle Hill and should return on the second day at the latest.

Now, this story did but serve to increase our resentment against Dennis Watson, and

Captain Trevor regretted that he could not accompany us homewards and go with us to do justice upon our enemy. And we had indeed been glad of his company, and were sorry to part with him and his men at Doncaster, where they went southwards to Newark, while we pursued our journey along the Great North Road.

It was far into the evening when we arrived at Dale's Field and gave Rose into the hands of my mother and Lucy, who were so overjoyed to see her that they laughed and cried at the same moment, and made a great to-do in the way of preparing a feast for our refreshment. But, tired as I was, I had no mind for rest or food until I had settled my account with Dennis Watson. And, indeed, I dare say my dear love wondered that I had so little to say to her at that time, but the truth was that I was so full of hatred and revenge that I could neither eat, sit, sleep, nor talk until I had

done somewhat to satisfy my heart. Wherefore we had no sooner arrived than I sent off one of my men on horseback to Darrington, bidding him find three trusty friends of mine there, whom he was to bring back with him on the instant. While he was gone I went into the yard and talked with Jacob Trusty, who was very bitter against the Roundheads that night, a party of them having ridden into the fold on the previous day and seized two of my best bullocks.

"Yea, marry," said Jacob, "and had the assurance to sing psalms over the poor beasts as they drove them along the road! Oh, an I had had my old musket I would have given them a taste of cold lead. For thou knowest, William, I had meant those bullocks for Doncaster market, and now, I suppose, they are roast meat. However, 'tis a world of disappointments."

Presently my messenger returned from

Darrington, bringing with him my three friends, who were all stout and sturdy young farmers. I led them into the house, where Philip Lisle was eating his supper, and to him and them I shortly explained what I wished to do. To settle with Dennis Watson, I said, was my affair, and I desired no man to be with me in the matter. But so that we might come at him, I proposed to go in a body to Castle Hill and there oblige him to come forth and account to me for his doings. And having said this I begged my friends to refresh themselves, and meanwhile I went out and provided my four ploughmen with a stout cudgel apiece, so that there were nine of us ready to seek Dennis Watson. Presently, then, we set off, leaving Jacob Trusty and Timothy Grass looking wistfully after us, for they would have much liked to go with us but for their increasing infirmities.

Now, the farm at Castle Hill lieth beyond

the Stapleton woods on a rising ground halfway between Darrington and Kirk Smeaton. Why it is called Castle Hill I know not, unless it is because there was at some time a fortified tower on the spot where now stands the farmstead tenanted by the Watsons. It is a lonely place, being surrounded by deep woods, and the house itself is old and gloomy and here and there in a ruinous state. As we left the woods and drew near to it that night, the moon shone clearly on its roofs and chimneys and lighted us beneath the trees to the door. There was no light to be seen in any of the windows, and we saw no men about the yard, so that the whole place looked deserted and dreary.

We left our little force within easy call, while Philip and I went up to the door and knocked loudly at it. The noise echoed through the house inside with a hollow and empty sound, and no one answered our

summons. We had knocked three times in this way and received no response, when an old woman came round the corner of the house and asked fearfully what we wanted.

"We want Master Dennis Watson," I answered. "Where is he, dame?"

"Alack, master!" she answered; "that I cannot say. He was here this morning, yea, indeed, but he rode away before noon, and since then his father hath been well-nigh mad, so that I pray you go your ways lest he come out and do you an injury."

But at that moment the door was flung open and Rupert Watson himself appeared on the threshold, a tall, weird-looking figure with white hair and beard. I had not seen him for many a year, and it startled me to see the change that had come over him, for in former days he had been a sturdy, square-shouldered man, but now was old and somewhat bent and looked fiercer than a wolf.

"Who are ye?" he asked. "Is this a time to come knocking at honest men's doors?"

"Ay," I answered, "if there be such excuse as we have, Master Watson."

And I stepped back a pace or two so that the moon shone full upon my face and figure. He started as he saw me, and I knew that he noted the resemblance to my father.

"William Dale's lad!" he said. "William Dale! What should a Dale want of me?"

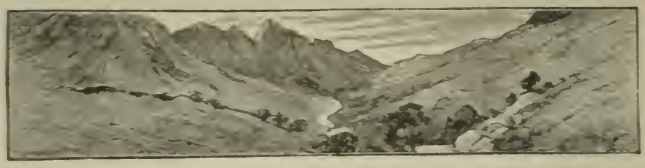
"Your son, Master Watson."

He lifted his hands and shook them in the moonlight, and his eyes gleamed through his bushy eyebrows.

"My son? I have no son! Son? He that was my son hath robbed me—me, his father! A thousand guineas that I had saved and hidden—do you hear?—he hath taken them all and fled, like a thief. My son—my only son. Begone, William Dale,

begone. Nay, stand there, stand there, and hear me curse him!"

We stood silent and horrified, watching the old man as he shook his trembling hands in the air and cursed his son in the name of God. The men behind us crept up and listened and trembled; the old woman, weeping and sobbing by the house wall, shivered and quaked as the terrible white-haired figure lifted his arms in the moonlight and cursed his son with awful words. And then suddenly the old man paused in the midst of his denunciation and fell down on the ground as if he were dead. Truly the wrongs that himself had done were returning to him in tenfold measure.



CHAPTER VI.

OF THE SURRENDER OF PONTEFRACT CASTLE.

SO Dennis Watson had escaped me, and there was naught for it but to wait with what patience I could for some future opportunity of settling matters with him. We left the wretched old man his father to the care of his own people, and returned to Dale's Field. Until that moment our recent adventures had not brought me any feeling of fatigue, for I had thought of naught but punishing my enemy, but when we found Dennis flown beyond our immediate reach, a reaction came over me, and I was glad to get home and into my bed, where I slept as soundly as a bear in winter.

It was now the first day of June, and we had been away from the castle four days. During our absence no news had come to Dale's Field of any change in the position of affairs, only, said Jacob Trusty, who took a keen interest in the siege, the cannonading had been much more vigorous than previously. We were not inclined to remain longer away from the scene of hostilities than we could help, and we therefore determined to make an attempt to pass the enemy's lines that night. We passed the day at Dale's Field, resting after our exertions, and receiving many messages from my mother and Lucy for Ben Tuckett, who they imagined must by that time have suffered exceedingly from his long privation. Also in the afternoon of that day I went round my farm with Rose, whom, until then, I had not seen for a long time, and did not know when I should see again.

We left Dale's Field after dark, and

pushed on towards Pontefract, hearing now and then the sound of a solitary gun fired by besiegers or besieged. It was no easy matter to pass the enemy's lines, for they had begun to keep a very zealous watch, but by the exercise of care and patience we eluded their vigilance, and were admitted to the Castle again about an hour before midnight. Then we learned that the Governor had that day received letters from Sir Marmaduke Langdale to the effect that the King's forces had been successful at Derby, and that success was everywhere attending the royal arms. This joyful news had raised the spirits of the garrison to a high degree, for now there was good hope of His Majesty's coming to sweep away the Roundheads and raise the siege.

To no one was this prospect more grateful than to Ben Tuckett, whom I perceived to have grown at least two inches less in girth since I had left him, notwithstanding the fact

that there was now plenty of fresh meat in the Castle. The fact was poor Ben was beginning to feel the effect of the confinement, and he was also pining for a sight of his sweetheart. He was in a very dolorous mood when we found him, in spite of the good news from Derby.

"Thou hast been to Dale's Field, Will?" said he, having heard all we had to tell him concerning our adventures.

"Indeed we have, Ben. We lay there last night, and passed the day there into the bargain."

"Ah!" said he, sighing deeply; "it must have been exceeding pleasant. Did they speak of me at all, Will?"

"There was a time, Ben, when they spoke of naught else. I am charged with a thousand messages for thee, only the mischief is that I have forgotten them. I remember that Lucy sent thee her dearest love and duty, and my mother bade me tell

thee to mind and not take a chill after thou hast gotten warm with fighting, but what else they said I cannot now think of. However, thou canst imagine it all."

"'Tis very kind of them," he answered, "very kind indeed to remember such an unfortunate mortal. Do not forget to tell them that I always thought of them, Will."

"'Od's mercy, Jack!" said I, "what is he talking about? One might suppose he was going to die before ever he got out of the Castle."

"And what have I to live for?" groaned Ben. "I am a ruined man. Alas! thou knowest not what terrible things have happened since you and Master Lisle there rode away."

"Nay," said Philip, "we have heard of naught particular."

"'Twas but day before yesterday," said Ben, "the Roundheads went up town and occupied my house in the Market-place.

You must know, gentlemen, that I have always kept an eye on my house, having gone up to the Round Tower three or four times a day to see if it still stood. Well, 'twas bad enough for these rogues to go and occupy my house, for between you and me I had hidden a pretty stock of goods in it before I fled to the Castle, hoping they would not be found until the siege was over, but what was my horror to find that our gunners were playing the cannon from the Swillington Tower full upon it! Yea, and continued to do so in spite of my prayers and admonitions, saying that they cared not whose house it was as long as they drove the Roundheads out of it. And now my house is a ruin, and as for the goods that I had hidden——"

"Never mind, Ben," said I; "you will find another house easily enough."

"And shall I find my stock and my furniture!" he groaned. "Alas! I am a

ruined man. However, they have not destroyed my money, lads, because Lucy and I buried what I had, under the hearth-stone at Dale's Field."

"I thought it would be a wonderful thing if they had burnt all thy ships, Ben," said Jack Drumbleforth. "Why, you old miser, you ought to have given that money to the King's cause."

"Will the King set me up in business again?" asked Ben. "I trow not, lads. Every man for himself, say I. If His Majesty would but come and relieve us, I would not object to parting with some of my store, but he delays so long that I fear he will never come at all."

On the 3rd of June, however, there came to us letters from Newark, conveying intelligence of a great victory achieved by the King at Leicester. His Majesty had made a vigorous assault upon that town, and had finally carried the siege, making the garrison

prisoners to the number of fifteen hundred, and securing an immense booty, which was instantly divided amongst the Royalist soldiers. Upon learning this news we were all greatly pleased, and Ben Tuckett so far plucked up his fallen spirits as to offer to lead a sally against the Roundheads in their trenches.

We now lived in daily hopes of seeing the arrival of a great force charged with the mission of relieving us, but we heard of nothing until the 6th of June, when a prisoner taken in the Castle mill informed us that the King's troops were coming to our relief, and had already reached Tuxford. He further said that the Parliamentary forces were retreating northward before the King, and would probably assemble in our neighbourhood, where a great battle was therefore to be expected shortly. This information we believed to be true, for two days later there came a great body of Parliamentary horse

from the southward which had been obliged to quit their quarters about Doncaster and Tickhill. The next day, too, we heard heavy firing in the direction of Sheffield, and from this circumstance argued that our friends were drawing near. Two days, however, passed away, and no relief force appeared, so that we knew not what to think. Nevertheless, we were so far from being cast down by the delay, that on the 11th we made a great sally from the Castle in different directions, and prevailed so mightily against the enemy that we left forty of them dead upon the field, and brought eleven prisoners into the Castle, together with a great supply of muskets, pikes, and ammunition, which we found in their trenches and outworks. As for our own losses, they were but very slight, for none of our men were killed, and only two wounded.

We heard no more news until the 16th of June, when General Poyntz, commander

of the Parliamentary forces at Pontefract, sent a drum to the Castle with a letter for Sir William Lowther, in which it was stated that a great battle had been fought at Naseby two days previously, whereat the King had been utterly routed, nearly two thousand Royalists having been left dead on the field, and five thousand taken prisoners, together with all the King's artillery and baggage. The letter further summoned us to surrender at once, saying that it were best policy to do so while mercy was yet to be hoped for, for there was now a great Parliamentary force at hand, and we should shortly be obliged to submit whether we would or not.

Now, we did not believe this news, because we had but a little time previously received letters from Newark, dated June 14th, in which Colonel Washington informed us that His Majesty was at that time at Melton Mowbray, and was preparing to

march forward to our assistance. We therefore regarded General Poyntz's letter as a trick of the enemy, and Sir William Lowther immediately informed the officer who had brought it that he neither feared the forces that might come against us, nor valued the mercy which was offered, and bade him begone with that answer to his commander. We were subsequently strengthened in our belief that General Poyntz's news was false by the reception of more letters from Newark, in which the King was still spoken of as advancing to succour us. But as the days passed on no help came, and we presently began to wonder whether our information was correct or not. Shortly, however, we received news from our own friends of the battle of Naseby, but their account differed vastly from that given us by General Poyntz; for whereas he had represented the affair as a Roundhead victory, our informants told us that the fight had been resumed

after the defeat of the King, and that our forces rallying had put the Parliamentary troops to flight, routing them utterly and slaying thousands of them, including General Cromwell.

We continued in this fashion for many days after that, now hearing one thing and now another, and hardly knowing which rumour to believe. Meanwhile, our enemy often received reinforcements which came marching from north or south as the case might be, and formed fresh obstacles to our success. The siege went on in the same fashion, each side doing its best to cripple the other. But while we were able to slay many of the Roundheads, they did us little damage owing to our secure position. Nevertheless, we had an enemy inside the Castle whose power we feared far more than even the terrible Cromwell himself. This was starvation, which now began to creep upon us slowly but very surely. By the

27th of June, we had no fresh provisions whatever, and there was no prospect of relief coming to us from any quarter. This scarcity of food bred discouragement and discontent amongst our men, several of whom deserted at this time.

We were now indeed in a sad plight. The help which had been so constantly promised to us, and the thought of which had lifted up our hearts in the struggle, came not, and we were therefore not only hungry but heartsick. Nevertheless we were resolved, or at any rate the majority of us were, to hold the Castle in the King's name until the last moment. About the beginning of the second week in July, we had more letters from Newark, one of which named the day and hour when Sir Marmaduke Langdale would come to our aid, and this good news was presently confirmed by another letter from Sandal Castle, wherein we were told that the relieving force was at

hand. But we had barely read these letters when definite tidings reached us of the complete defeat of the Royalist forces under Goring and Langdale, and of the approach of further reinforcements to the Parliamentary army already surrounding us.

So now our last hopes were fled, and there was naught for it but to make an honourable surrender. We had defended the Castle for a space of five months, and during that time we had slain over a thousand of our enemies with very little loss to ourselves. If we had been able to secure provisions we could have held out for the King for ever, for the place was so strong as to be wellnigh impregnable. Food, however, we could not get, and we could do the King no good by starving to death. At this point the besiegers made us honourable offers as to our surrender, which we presently accepted, marching away from the Castle at eight o'clock on the morning of July 21,

1645. The major portion of the garrison went forward to Newark, but I and my companions stayed at Dale's Field, and were not sorry to see somewhat in the way of home comforts after our long and serious privations.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE DEATH OF PHILIP LISLE.

IT was now drawing near harvest time, and I determined to see my crops gathered and garnered before I did aught else. To tell truth I had lost a good deal during the recent hostilities, for the Roundheads had levied contributions on my cattle many a time while the siege was in progress, so that when I came back to Dale's Field I found myself poorer by some fourteen or fifteen head of cattle, to say naught of a score or so of sheep. However, I was thankful to find that they had not burnt my house or my buildings, which was what I had feared more than once.

I took Philip and Ben home with me to Dale's Field when we left the Castle, while Jack Drumbleforth went to his father's house, where the vicar was much delighted with the sight of his son. Now that we were all at home again the women made much of us, for they were all agreed that we looked like half-starved rats. Naught would suffice them upon the day of our coming home but that we must have a feast, and to this joyful event a messenger was despatched to bring Parson Drumbleforth and Jack. We were very merry that night, and Ben Tuckett, having found his spirits again, amused us with stories of his own prowess during the siege, which, to hear him talk, were exceeding great and wonderful. Cause for rejoicing, however, we had little beyond the fact that we were all safe and sound. Our party was defeated on all sides, and we knew not what would happen next.

"I shall to the wars again," said Jack, when we began to discuss the future. "Beaten we are, no doubt; but I will go fight for the King until the last blow has been struck."

"Well said, Jack," said Philip Lisle; "I will go with you. We seem to be vanquished at this present time, but all is not lost yet."

"Gentlemen," said Ben Tuckett, who sat in the chimney corner near Lucy, "if you only knew how warmly I approve your sentiments, you would be delighted. I love to see brave men. However, my duty forbids me to further engage in warfare. I have looked after the King's business so long that my own hath suffered. As for my house it is in ruins—and 'twas a Royalist cannon did it, too—and I suppose my stock which lay hidden there is lost."

"Thou art not the only man that has lost something," said Jack. "It will be worse

for many than for thee, Ben. God send they do not fine all of us that have taken part with the King."

"That is what I expect them to do," said Philip Lisle.

"What!" cried Ben. "And will they fine me, too? After all I have lost? Then I had best do naught in the way of reopening my shop. They cannot fine me if I have naught, can they?"

"They can clap thee into gaol, lad," said Jack. "Yea, and hold thee there until thou hast paid the piper."

"Alas!" cried poor Ben, "was ever man so unfortunate! However, if only it be a small fine——"

And with that he began to look hard at the hearthstone under which he and Lucy had buried his money, and after that he said no more, but seemed to think deeply. But when my mother and the girls had gone to bed and Jack and Philip were talking

their plans over, he drew me into a corner and began to talk confidentially.

"Will," said he, "I have been thinking to-night that it is high time you and I were settled. We are neither of us as young as we were."

"Speak for thyself, Ben. As for me, I am four and twenty."

"Is it so little? Well, to be sure I am thy junior. Somehow I had thought myself two-score at least. It is, I suppose, because I have passed through so much tribulation. However, to the point. It is, I say, time we were settled."

"Are we not settled already?"

"A man never is settled," said Ben, wisely, "until he be married."

"Oh, now I see what thou art driving at, Master Benjamin. I suppose you and Mistress Lucy are so smitten with each other's good looks that you wish to hasten the wedding."

"Put it as you please," said he. "For my part, I do not see why Parson Drumbleforth should not marry us as soon as harvest is over. I tell thee what I think, Will. Lucy and I have gotten two hundred guineas in gold hidden under yonder hearthstone, which is a sum that no man may despise. I want not to lose it in fines and penalties. Now, if I open my shop again, these Roundhead rogues, seeing me a man of substance, will levy a heavy fine upon me, and I shall lose all. So let me lie quietly here, working in thy harvest field until matters have blown over somewhat. Then we will all be married and my money will be safe. What do you think?"

"I think, Ben, that thou art a second Solomon. However, these are not overpleasant times for marrying. You would not like Lucy to be a widow within a month of her wedding."

"Heaven forbid!" said he, turning pale at the thought. "Why should she?"

"Because thou hast been such a bold assailer of the Roundheads that they may desire to cut off thy head. Wait a while, Ben, till the country be settled."

But when I came to consider what Ben had said, I began to think there might be some reason in his notions. Come what might, it was my intention to go no more to the wars: let the King and the Commons do what they would, I meant to stay at home and mind my own business. And since I had made up my mind to that, why should I not hasten my wedding and so have a better right than ever to protect my dear love? The more I thought of the matter the more I liked the idea, so that before I slept that night I resolved to see what Rose thought of it. The next morning I rose early and went out to look round my farm, and finding Rose already risen, I asked her

to go with me, as had been her custom in the days before I went a-fighting. So we went hand in hand through the fields, which were already ripening unto harvest.

"How strange it seems," said Rose, as we walked slowly along, "not to hear the sound of the cannon. All day we used to listen to it, and at every shot we prayed God that none of ours should suffer. Not a day passed that we did not think of you, and wonder what you were doing, and whether you were ill or well, and many a time did old Jacob take his staff and walk across the fields to the hill-top, so that he might come back and tell us that the King's standard still floated over the Castle. And now here you are safe and sound once more."

"Yes," I answered, "and I shall never go away again, Rose, of my own free will. Let those fight that will: if I had stayed at home and minded my own business, that villain had not vexed you."

"Hush, hush!" she said. "Let that be; I am none the worse for such vexation as that."

"Nevertheless," I said, "here I am and here I stay. These times of trouble are not over yet, and I shall do better to protect my own than to go a-fighting for the King. You had rather I stayed at home than that I went to the wars, Rose?"

"Why," said she, laughing, "is not that a strange question to ask of me, considering that I do not care to trust you out of my sight, Master Will?"

And she smiled so archly in my face and looked at me with such eyes of love that I took her into my arms and told her of all that was in my mind, namely, that I wanted her to marry me as soon as harvest was in, so that in future I could watch over her even more closely than before. To which she answered honestly and fondly that she was mine and mine only, and would do what-

ever I pleased. So that matter was settled, and we went homewards across the fields to acquaint Philip Lisle of our desires; and if there were any people in all God's world who were happier than we were at that moment it is a marvel to me, for our happiness was much too great for words.

We found Philip and Jack busied in cleaning their harness, while Ben sat by and lectured them on the folly of war in general and of this war in particular. Whether they attended to his remarks I know not, but at the moment of our arrival they were conversing together in undertones, so that I think Master Ben's discourse flew above their heads.

"War," quoth Ben, as we came up, "was first of all invented by the evil one, and therefore no wise man ought to engage in it. As for me I only went into the Castle to defend myself, because, gentlemen, every honest citizen hath a right to take up arms

when his own good estate is threatened. But as to fighting for a—— "

"Good Ben," said I, "you ought to have been a parson, for your tongue is ever ready;" and I came close to him and asked him if he had sounded Lucy as to his plans of the previous night. To which he answered that he had not, but he knew Lucy's mind on that matter as well as he knew his own. So with that I bade him find Lucy and take her to my mother, and to them I brought Philip and Rose, and we there and then arranged matters for a double wedding, which was to take place as soon as we had got harvest over, if nothing contrary happened in the mean time.

"Only, my children," said Philip, "do not wait for my coming, for if I am not here at the appointed day it will be because urgent business keepeth Jack and me elsewhere. I shall be with you in spirit if not in the flesh. For you know, Will, that His

Majesty hath been very generous to me in the past, and I will not desert him now that he hath fallen low."

And with that he gave us his blessing and kissed Rose many times and shook my hand, and later in the afternoon, he and Jack rode away, promising to return in six weeks' time so that they might see us married.

"We are for Newark first," said Jack, "but after that God knows where we shall go. However, lads, it shall go hard with us but we strive to ride northward when you are made Benedicts."

And so they rode away and we settled down to our quiet farm life. With the fall of the Castle, military operations in our parts were almost over, and people were permitted to attend to their own matters in peace. Sir Thomas Fairfax had been appointed Governor of the Castle by the House of Commons, and for a while he busied himself in making strict inquiry as

to those of our neighbourhood who had resisted the Parliament, and in dispersing such Royalists as gathered together in any numbers. Us, however, he was pleased to let alone, probably because he found that we were engaged in our own pursuits and had no mind for further fighting. This suited Ben and myself, for with August the harvest began and we were at work early and late. Nevertheless, we were watched pretty closely by the Parliamentary authorities, as were all men who had retired to their own homes after leaving the Royalist army.

As the harvest drew to an end the two girls were busily occupied in preparing much finery for the wedding. My mother, who had many old-fashioned ideas on this subject, had set apart a chamber for them, wherein they shaped and sewed and had the help of a woman who was skilled in fine sewing. Into this chamber Ben and I did often try

to peep, but were jealously excluded, all the comfort we got being an assurance that we should see our brides very fine on the wedding-day. Presently it became time for us to put the banns up at church, and Ben was mightily tickled at hearing his own name read out in conjunction with Lucy's. Indeed, as the time drew near there was no prouder man than Ben Tuckett in all the country.

Upon the third day before the wedding, Ben and I were coming from Wentbridge when we heard a horse climbing the hill behind us. It was drawing towards night, and there was a thick mist in the valley, so that we could not make out the face or figure of the horseman until he was close upon us. But when the horse and its rider came out of the mist a great sinking of heart stole over me, for I saw that it was Jack Drumbleforth, and he was alone. He recognized us at the same moment and

spurred his tired horse forward. Then we saw that he himself was careworn and in evil plight, for one arm hung loosely at his side, and there was a wound across his cheek that had lately bled.

"Jack!" I cried, as we ran up to him. "Jack, you have evil news?"

"The worst, Will," he answered, speaking with difficulty. "The worst. Philip Lisle is dead. He was killed last night near Newark, and so was Captain Trevor and many another."

And with that a great darkness seemed to fall across us, and I could only think of what my dear Rose must suffer when she heard the sad news.

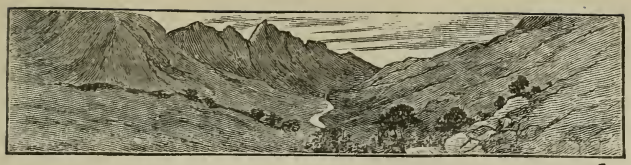
"I am hurt," said Jack. "My arm is broke, I think. Let us go on, Will, for I am like to fall off my horse."

We went homeward sadly enough, Ben leading Jack's horse, while I walked at the side and let Jack lean on my shoulder. We

were debating how we should break the news to Rose, when she and Lucy suddenly came out of one of the fields by the roadside and ran to meet us. Suddenly she caught sight of Jack's face, and all the colour went out of her own. But she came forward and laid her hand on his, and looked at him with such pleading eyes that I saw the tears start into his own as he looked down at her.

"My father?" she said. "My father?"

"Dear Mistress Rose," he answered. "I would rather have died myself than have brought you sad news. Your dear father was a brave man, and he died a brave man's death."



CHAPTER VIII.

OF OUR IMPRISONMENT IN PONTEFRACT CASTLE.

SO there was no more talk of our marriage at that time, and I went sadly enough to tell Parson Drumbleforth that it would not take place, and that his son Jack had got a grievous hurt. And thereupon arose a stout controversy between the vicar's housekeeper and myself, for Mistress Deborah was for having Jack brought home at once so that she could nurse him, while I was all for keeping him at Dale's Field, where I knew he would have better care taken of him than in the Vicarage. In this matter I carried the day,

for the vicar agreed with me, albeit he had hard work to convince his housekeeper, of whom he stood in no little fear. So at Dale's Field Jack remained, and Parson Drumbleforth used to walk out there to see him every day.

Now, at first my dear Rose would not trouble Jack to tell her the manner of her father's death, because she knew that he himself was badly hurt, and she feared to do aught to increase the fever into which he had fallen. But when they had nursed him into something like his old self she took me by the hand one afternoon and led me into Jack's chamber, where the vicar was sitting with his son, and there she asked him to tell us all that had happened.

"And do not fear, Master John," said she, "to tell me everything, for you can say nothing that will hurt me more than what I already know. Only I shall be better and happier to know how my dear father died."

So she sat and listened to what Jack had to tell us of this sad matter, and she held my hand in her own all the while as if she got some comfort from knowing that I was near her.

It was not a long story that Jack had to tell. They had followed the garrison to Newark, and had there found many Royalists who had fled from the Parliamentarians after the fight at Naseby, and in this company they had remained some time, scarcely knowing what to do next. For some talked of one thing and some of another, but nobody seemed to know whether the King would again rally his forces or not. Here and there in the Midlands were houses still fortified against the Parliamentarians, and at various places were gatherings of Royalist troops, but there was no one to direct them, for the King's army had been entirely disorganized at the battle of Naseby. The Parliamentarians were meanwhile continually

engaged in surrounding and disarming the scattered Royalists, and in reducing to subjection such fortresses as the country gentlemen had retreated to, and it was in riding forth to relieve one of these houses that Philip Lisle and Captain Trevor had met their death. For the place was one that was well protected, being naturally strong and surrounded by a deep moat, but the Roundheads had wellnigh starved the garrison into subjection, when Captain Trevor organized a relieving party and set out to give help to his comrades. Between this expedition and the Parliamentarians a stout fight had resulted, bnt the enemy vastly outnumbering them, his own party, said Jack, had been beaten, and the garrison subsequently obliged to surrender.

"There were very few of us left to fight in the end," said Jack, "and Master Lisle and Captain Trevor and myself were cut off from the rest, so that the enemy bade us

surrender while there was hope of mercy. But we would have naught of that, and continued to engage them as best we could. And then Master Lisle's horse was killed under him, so that he was brought to his feet, and Captain Trevor was shot through the heart immediately afterwards, leaving me and Master Lisle fighting back to back. Then I heard him shout behind me, 'For God and the King!' in a hearty voice, but presently I felt him reel against me and fall across his horse, and at the same moment my arm was shattered and the pain was so fearful that I fainted and knew no more. But when I came to myself after some time the fight was over, and Captain Trevor and Master Lisle lay near me, both dead, and with such a peaceful look on their faces that I knew they had felt no pain in their death. By that time the Roundheads had passed away to another part of the field, so I watched my opportunity and captured a

horse that was grazing near, and because the enemy was thick between me and Newark I came north, knowing that I could do no more in those parts."

So that was all that he had to tell us, and my dear love, though she shed many tears while he spoke, was comforted somewhat because she now knew all. However, she often sat near Jack after that, and would ask him to tell her of all that had befallen her father since she had last seen him; whereupon Jack would strive to remember all that Philip had said and done, recalling many incidents that he thought would be pleasing to her.

Now, although it was out of the question for us to be married at that time, both Rose and I felt that our sorrow ought not to stand in the way of Ben's and Lucy's happiness, and after a time we begged them to arrange with Parson Drumbleforth for their wedding. But while honest Ben was greatly pleased

with us for thinking of him, he would not listen to our proposal.

"Nay, Will," quoth he, when I told him what we wished, "indeed neither Lucy nor myself would consent to joys which you and Rose cannot share. Do we not feel for poor Rose as keenly as if it were our own trouble? Marry, and so we ought, for are we not all as one family? So let us wait until spring, when Rose's first grief will have gained some comfort, and then we will all be married together."

And with that he wrung my hand and hastened away to his work; for he had become an ardent farmer, and was for ever busying himself amongst the sheep or the cattle.

So the time passed on until the spring of 1646, and until then we were allowed to live peaceably upon our land, minding our own business as we did before the war began. There was no fighting or next to

none that winter, and we were in hopes that the King and the Commons might adjust their differences and rid the land of that hateful war. We heard little at that time of what was going on. Some said that the Scotch were coming to rescue the King; others, that the Presbyterians and the Independents were about to fight between themselves for supremacy. In the first week of May, 1646, we heard that His Majesty had entered the Scottish camp at Newark, and soon afterwards we learned that the Scotch army, carrying the King with them, had retreated to Newcastle. But we had little time to think of these matters, for there were fresh troubles gathering round ourselves.

When the second siege of Pontefract Castle was over, the Governor, Sir Thomas Fairfax, in pursuance of orders from the Commons, occupied himself in pursuing such of the Royalist forces as were still banded together, and in reducing the various manor-

houses in that neighbourhood which were still fortified, and that he might not be hindered in this work he appointed one Colonel Cotterel to be his Vice-Governor, and gave him a force of a hundred men wherewith to occupy the Castle. For a while Colonel Cotterel left the Royalists of his neighbourhood pretty much to their own devices, doing no more than keeping his eye upon them so that they might not band themselves together again. But when the military power began to make itself felt—for at that time Cromwell and his army were the real rulers of England—he, taking his orders no doubt from his superiors, began to harass the Royalist gentlemen of his neighbourhood with exceeding severity. It was known which of us had helped to hold the Castle against the Parliament, and we presently found ourselves narrowly watched and treated in such a fashion as was hard for flesh and blood to bear. But

ere long even sterner measures were employed against us.

It was, I think, one evening about the middle of May, 1646, that a party of troopers, headed by an officer, rode into our yard at Dale's Field and called for me. I went out to speak to them, and found the officer to be one John Campion, a man that I had known many years for a stout Roundhead.

"Well, Master Dale," said he, "we have come to request you to take a little ride with us this evening. Colonel Cotterel desires your presence at the Castle."

Now, I could not at first understand why Colonel Cotterel should send for me, who wished not to have aught to do with him or his, but I reflected that I could not help obeying his summons, seeing that he had sent twenty armed men to fetch me, and I therefore saddled my horse and bade my friends farewell, telling them not to fear if

I did not return that night. So we rode away, but came to a halt at Darrington, where Campion delivered a similar message to Jack Drumbleforth, who was then living with his father. What they wanted with us at the Castle neither Jack nor I could make out, but we agreed that we were being fetched thither for no good. And this turned out to be the case, for we were no sooner inside the Barbican than our horses were taken from us and we were shown into the Governor's presence, who informed us that because of our resistance to the Parliament we were condemned to pay a fine, which in my case amounted to two hundred pounds, and Jack's to half that sum. Moreover, continued Cotterel, he had received proof that we and others of our way of thinking were meditating a fresh rising in these parts, and we must therefore consider ourselves prisoners until such times as he saw fit to release us.

Now, we felt this to be very harsh and overbearing conduct, for it proved that the Roundheads were not willing to let us be at peace when we had no intention of being at aught else; and as for the fines, we felt it unjust to thus punish us for having done what we believed to be our duty. However, we were in their power and could not help ourselves, and we therefore took up our quarters in the Castle with what patience we could, only begging them to inform our friends of what had happened to us. This they speedily did, for they shortly sent to Dale's Field, and seized upon my cattle and sheep in satisfaction of the fine they had imposed upon me, so that I had neither horse, ox, nor sheep left, and poor Jacob Trusty was wellnigh beside himself with grief and anger.

We soon found that we were not the only prisoners in the Castle, for Colonel Cotterel had sent out and apprehended many Royalists

of these parts whom he supposed to be inventing plans for another rising on behalf of the King. As for fines, he now busily employed himself in levying them upon all who had formerly defended the Castle. Some he obliged to compound for their estates, others he sentenced to the payment of fines such as he had imposed upon me, so that there was not a Royalist gentleman or yeoman in all Osgoldcross that was not cruelly made to pay for his loyalty. Some indeed paid great amounts. Sir George Wentworth was fined three thousand pounds; Sir Nicholas Yarborough paid six hundred pounds; Francis Neville paid a thousand pounds; Sir George Dalston paid seven hundred pounds; Sir William Lowther, the late Governor, paid two hundred; while Sir John Woolstoneholme of Nostel, who had given his plate to the King, was fined the value thereof, namely, ten thousand pounds.

We remained prisoners in Pontefract Castle for more than two years, during which time we saw naught of our friends, and knew little as to their welfare. But during that time a movement began amongst the Royalists of our parts which ended in the Castle being surprised and wrested from the possession of our enemies. There was in the Castle at the time of our imprisonment a gentleman named Morrice, who had lived a somewhat adventurous life, and had fought on both sides during the war between King and Commons. In his youth he had been page to Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, and had subsequently entered the King's service and fought as an officer. For some reason, which no one clearly knew, he quitted the Royalist forces and transferred his services to the Roundheads. In their cause he speedily distinguished himself and was advanced to the rank of colonel. His

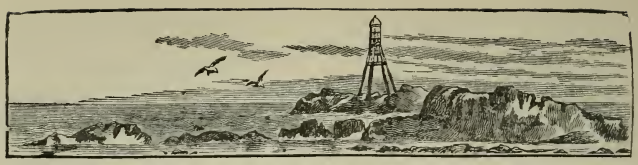
private character, however, was not pleasing to Cromwell, who would have none but sober and godly men in his army, so that when the New Model was formed in 1646, he was left unemployed, in consequence of which neglect he retired to his estate in Yorkshire and began to form plans for revenging himself upon the Parliamentary leaders by surprising Pontefract Castle. This he was all the more easily able to do because he was a very intimate friend of Cotterel, who was always inviting him to his table, and made much of his society. Morrice took advantage of this confidence to further his own designs. He contrived to entice certain of Cotterel's men into his own service, and he made such arrangements for surprising the Castle as seemed most suitable.

The Royalists at that time were accustomed to meet at the house of Mr. Beaumont, the Vicar of South Kirkby, some four

miles from the Castle, and to them Morrice communicated his designs as occasion arose. While he worked towards the end in view inside the Castle, they secretly made arrangements for bringing their men together at a convenient time. During these operations Cotterel had no notion that Morrice was actively working to betray him, and he continued to hold out to him many professions of friendship, to which Morrice suitably responded. Finally, after an abortive attempt, a successful recapture of the Castle was effected on the 6th of June, 1648, and Colonel Cotterel and such of his men as were not killed or wounded were strictly confined to the quarters where they had lately detained their Royalist prisoners.

The Castle was now once more in the hands of the King's friends, and those of us who had been imprisoned therein were free, and had the choice of remaining to garrison it against the Parliamentarians. Several

of my companions elected to follow this course, and went actively to work to provision the Castle, where there was now gathered a force of about six hundred men, who, on Morrice's recommendation, chose Sir John Digby to be their Governor. But for my part I was filled with anxiety about my friends, of whom I had heard but little for over two years, and I accordingly left the Castle and betook myself straightway to Dale's Field.



CHAPTER IX.

OF MY JOURNEY TO LONDON.

DREW near to my house with many anxious feelings, not knowing what news might be in store for me. We had been so zealously watched during our confinement in the Castle that it had been almost an impossibility to gain any knowledge of what was going on in the outside world. Once during the first few months after my arrest I had received tidings from Dale's Field, to the effect that all was well there, and that Ben was seeing to my affairs. But after that I had no more news, for Colonel Cotterel imposed many strict rules

upon his captives, and would permit no letters to pass either in or out, fearing lest somewhat of a treasonable and dangerous nature should be communicated. Whether they were all well and alive at Dale's Field, or some ailing and perchance dead, I did not know, which uncertainty often caused me many sad and weary thoughts.

It was towards the close of a summer evening when I drew near my house. Nothing seemed changed, so far as I could see from a hurried glance round the familiar objects. I thought as I stood at the orchard gate that I had never seen aught so beautiful as this homestead of mine, which my eyes then beheld for the first time for two long years. For the soft light of evening fell upon the house and the red-roofed buildings beyond, and the apple-trees in the orchard were in full bloom, and the great bushy lilacs were loaded with delicate clusters of blossom, and the honeysuckle that grew over the

porch was covered with yellow flower. Everything was very still about the house, and I passed through the orchard unobserved, and speedily gained the window of my mother's parlour. There I stole cautiously across the flower-beds and peeped into the room, hoping to see some face that would light up with welcome at the sight of me. But the room was empty, and I stood at the window examining it, and marvelling to find that it had changed in nothing since I had last seen it. For there was my mother's chair and table by the broad window-seat, and upon the table lay one of her religious books, and by its side some knitting work that she had evidently laid down on being called away to some household matter. Everything in that room, indeed, was just as it always had been, and it only needed her presence to make the picture spring into real life.

I left the window and went round the

corner of the house, intending to enter by the kitchen door. But I had no sooner got round the great bushes of holly with which our walls are surrounded on that side, than I saw a little group immediately before me, at sight of whom I stood still. There were Ben and Lucy and Rose, and they were listening to Jacob Trusty, who was leaning over the low wall of the fold and talking to them very earnestly. My footsteps had made no sound on the soft grass path, and they were unconscious of my presence. I stood for a moment watching them. Jacob was the only one whose face was towards me, and I noticed that he looked old and aged and care-worn. Suddenly he lifted his head and saw me. The girls turned and gave a little cry of wonder and surprise, looking at first as if they did not know me, which would have been no wonder, for I had grown a great beard during my captivity. But Rose suddenly sprang forward with a

great cry of "'Tis Will!" and in another moment they were all round me, laughing and crying over me and shaking my hand and clapping my back all at once.

"Dear heart!" said Jacob, "I thought I saw a ghost when I lifted up my head and caught sight of thee standing there. No finer sight have I seen this many a day."

"Alas!" said Rose. "You have changed, dear Will, since we last saw you, for you look pale and worn, and oh, so much older!"

"Why," said I, "that is just what I was thinking about all of you, for you all have a sad look that I like not. Yea, even thou, old Ben, lookest more sad than merry. But come, let us inside to my mother, and we will forget all our sadness for a time at least."

And I made a move towards the house, leading Rose with me. But Rose laid her

hand on my arm as if to stay me, and the others hung back, while Jacob Trusty shook his head.

"Rose," I cried, "what is it? What ails you all? Ben, speak. My mother?"

"Oh!" groaned Ben, "tell him, Rose."

But I knew it already. Something had told me there was sadness and sorrow for me at Dale's Field as I came along the highway in the summer twilight. Something in the sight of the empty parlour went to my heart and confirmed my sense of coming trouble. And now, when Ben spoke, a great wave of grief rose up in my heart and shut out past and future, so that I only knew that I was suffering as I had suffered that night, many years before, when my father was shot down before my very eyes.

I sat down on the low wall and covered my face with my hands and said naught. Only I heard the others go away, and felt Rose sit by me and place her arm within

mine as if she would comfort me, for which comfort I was exceeding grateful, my heart being like to burst with trouble. And after that she told me very gently that my dear mother had died a month before, after a short illness that occasioned her very little pain, and was now buried by my father's side in Darrington churchyard. So then I knew the worst and rose up to face my great sorrow manfully, but the heart within me was cold and heavy, and would have been empty of aught but grief if it had not been for my dear love, who did all to comfort me that a woman can do.

"'Tis a sad home-coming for you, my poor Will," said Rose, as she stood by me, "and I am afraid that Ben and Jacob have more sad news in store for you."

"They can tell me naught like what I have heard already," I said. "But let us go in, Rose, so that I may hear it and have it over. My heart is full of sorrow to-night,

and I should be in a poor way if it were not for you, sweetheart."

But with that she put her hands in mine and lifted up her face to kiss me, so that the love in her eyes gave me some new life, and I went inside with her to hear what bad news Ben had in store for me.

"We have had sore times, Will," said Ben, when the girls had found me something to eat and drink, and I was back in my old place at the head of the long table. "You need not marvel that we all look careworn and troubled."

"No, marry," said Jacob, who was seated inside the kitchen, comforting himself with a mug of ale. "No, for 'tis indeed a troublous time for honest folk. Such times, such times!"

"What hath happened?" I asked, somehow caring little how great or terrible the news was. It could not be worse than the blow that had already fallen upon me.

"Shall I tell him what hath happened since he was taken away from us, Jacob, or will you?" said Ben.

"Nay," answered Jacob, shaking his white head. "Nay, 'tis too much for me. Say on, Master Benjamin, say on."

So Ben proceeded to tell me of all that had occurred at Dale's Field since the evening, two years before, when the body of troopers fetched me away to the Castle. "Soon after that event," said Ben, "more troopers appeared at Dale's Field and carried away all the live stock and what grain and wool there was stored about the place, saying that they were levying distress upon thy goods in satisfaction of the fine imposed upon thee. So thoroughly did they carry out their business that they left naught but three of the horses and certain of the milch cows, all else in the shape of oxen and sheep being driven away before them, leaving fold and fields as bare as if the land had been tenantless."

"Well," said I, "I cannot help it. We are in strange times and must wait till better come."

"Ay," said Ben, "but that is not all, Will."

"No," said Jacob, "not by a long chalk."

"We might have brought matters round," continued Ben, "if they had left us in peace after that, but the mischief was that they put in another appearance soon after harvest and forced us to thresh the corn, the grain of which they immediately carted away, saying that thy fine was not yet satisfied. Presently they came again and took away many loads of straw, and this they repeated so often that we never knew when to expect them. As to resisting their demands we could not, for they were always a strong force and made much show of arms."

"Nevertheless," said Jacob, "they heard my mind upon the matter more than once."

"Well," continued Ben, "they kept up

this continual raid upon thy goods, Will, until very recently, so that they have made the place as barren as a clay-field. We could not get a little live stock together but that they came and seized it, nor have we had a harvest the fruits of which they have not claimed. Horses, cattle, sheep, all these have they got; nay, indeed, they have had all thy substance since the time they took thee to the Castle. Nevertheless, we did what we could, for whenever Jacob and I got the chance, we sold what stock and produce we conveniently could, and hid the money in safety for thee. But it has been a hard time, and we are wellnigh worn out with anxiety and sorrow."

And that I believed, for poor Ben's face was pinched and pale, and the merry look that was always in his eyes even when he was in his doleful moods was now gone, so that I saw the honest fellow had suffered more for me than I was aware of.

"Have patience, Ben," I said, trying to cheer them all; "they will rob me no more, for the Castle is once more in the hands of the King's friends, and these Roundhead knaves will not come cattle-lifting hereabouts yet a while. Levying distress in satisfaction of my fine, did they say? Marry, the fine was but two hundred pounds, and they must have taken the value of that a dozen times over. However, we will see if there be not some justice left in England yet, for I will have redress, if I have to fight for it."

"Ay," said Jacob, approvingly, "justice is a good word. But I fear me there is little of that same justice abroad at present, for 'tis these soldiers that administer everything nowadays. However, we will fight a whole body of Roundhead troopers an they come here again, reaving and racking. Oh, an thou couldst have seen the young bullocks I had fed for market last winter twelve-

month! A plague on fines and levies, say I."

But what was done was done, and we had to content ourselves for that time, being powerless to do anything. Yet it made my heart sad to go round my granaries, and barns, and stables, in which I had always taken such pride, and to find them empty and lifeless. Still it was no use to sit down and lament, and we accordingly set to work to restock the farm and get things into order again. Only I was a much poorer man when all was done than I had ever looked to be.

So now matters were very different from what they had been, and there was such gloom and sadness in our house as I had never known before. For wherever I went and whatever I did I missed my dear mother's presence, and often started to think I heard her voice calling me as in the old days. Nay, indeed, I could not at first believe that

I should never see her again nor hear her speak, and only realized my great loss when I went in at nights from the fields and saw her chair empty. As for her parlour, we left it just as it had been when she was last in it, her book lying on the table with a sprig of faded lilac marking the place where she had last read in it, and by its side the knitting which she had put down never to take up again. And into that room none of us went save when we wished to be alone with our own memories of her. Sometimes Parson Drumbleforth would come along the highway and go into the little room and sit there by himself, thinking, as he told us, of the days when he had sat there with my father and mother, and he would afterwards come out with a great look of calm and peace upon his face and bless us solemnly, and go his way homewards. And sometimes Jacob Trusty would go to the little window and peer over his horn spectacles at the book

and the knitting still lying on the little table, and then go back to his work as if he had seen some holy sight. And indeed I believe he saw more than we did, for he once told me that it seemed to him that when he thus visited the little parlour he could see his old mistress still sitting in her elbow chair, reading her book, while the bright needles clicked against each other as they went in and out through the wool.

"Yes," he would often say to Rose and Lucy, "ye see, lasses, what a holy and a blessed thing it is to have been a good woman. As for us men, we are rude, and fierce, and stern, and need a good woman to set us an example. Yea, and see what store is set by her, so that her good deeds work after her death."

Now, I was very busily engaged during the rest of that summer of 1648 in repairing so far as I could the damage done by the depredations of the Roundheads who had

so basely robbed me. Then came the corn harvest, and we made haste to gather and garner our crops, being firmly resolved that when they were once housed nothing but force should despoil us of them. All this time the last siege of Pontefract Castle had been in progress, for the Royalists under Colonel Morrice, having seized the Castle and released us who were confined there, were holding out against the Parliamentarian troops once more. This third siege continued during the remainder of the summer and into the autumn, by the middle of which season it was rumoured that General Cromwell himself was coming to aid in forcing a capitulation. When I heard this news I resolved that I would now endeavour to gain some redress for the wrongs put upon me. I had already been to my old friend Lawyer Hook, and had told him all that had happened. But to my story he had given little heed, saying that at present England

was under military law, and that Cromwell and his troops were above all ordinary statutes. Now, I believed that General Cromwell was a just and honest man, and I resolved that I would go to him, if he came into our parts, and tell him how I had been treated by Cotterel and his troops; for I was not minded to sit down calmly and suffer my serious loss without protest on my part.

It was in November that Cromwell came at the head of his troopers to take part in the siege of Pontefract Castle. Soon after his arrival he took up his quarters at Knottingley, which lies on the river side over against Ferrybridge. It was now my time to act, and I accordingly attired myself in my best and rode along the road to his quarters, where I presently found him and was admitted to his presence. He remembered me at once and listened patiently to my complaint, bidding me speak freely to him. So I took heart and told him all my

story, confessing that I was willing to pay the fine imposed upon me—though I acknowledged not its justice — but complaining strongly that ten times its value had been taken from me when I could not help myself. Moreover I said that if he and his friends were anxious to do justice they would give me back my own. To which he answered that it was for justice he and his men were fighting, and that they would rob no man unjustly. Nevertheless, he continued, all must be done in a proper manner. He then counselled me to go to London, where he himself would shortly be, and to there prosecute my claim in due form, promising me that he would do what he could to aid me in securing compensation for what I had been despoiled of, over and above my fine; and that I might travel in safety, he gave me a safe-conduct.

Thus it came about that I made my journey to London at a time when great

events were stirring. It was not to my liking to leave home again so soon, but there was Ben to look after my affairs for me, and it was winter, when things are quiet on the land; so I decided to go, and ultimately set out for the capital on the 1st of December, 1648.

CHAPTER X.

OF THE SCENE BEFORE WHITEHALL, JANUARY 30, 1649.

I SPENT five days in travelling to London, riding my own horse all the way, and keeping him up to his five and thirty miles a day by letting him have his fill of good food and a long night's rest between each stage of the journey. To me this adventure was full of novelty and incident, for I had never been further south than Sheffield, and knew nothing of England outside my own county, save what I had seen in the neighbourhood of the Peak when we went in search of Rose. My eyes there-

fore had plenty of occupation as I rode along the Great North Road, which busy highway I followed all the way to London, passing through the market-towns of Doncaster, Newark, Peterborough, Huntingdon, and Hatfield, in each of which I saw something worthy of notice. My mind indeed had never any occasion to be idle, for there was always some new object or matter claiming my attention : now a troop of soldiers passing along the road, or a country squire and his family going to their seat, now a company of drovers taking their cattle to Smithfield, and now a Cavalier riding along with dejected looks. At the inns where I rested o' nights there was always plenty of company and no lack of conversation, but in this I engaged little, being minded to hold my tongue and let other folk do the talking. Nevertheless, I kept my ears open to what was said, being anxious to know what news was being noised abroad. The talk at all the wayside inns

was of the King, men asking all travellers from London what tidings there were of His Majesty and of what it was intended to do with him. Anxious, however, as all men were for news, there were few that ventured on giving their opinions on these great matters, for the army was at that time all-powerful, and a man hardly dare speak what was in his mind for fear of being heard by some one who might do him an injury.

It was late in the afternoon of the 6th of December when I came in view of the capital, and passed by the villages of Edgware and Tottenham on my way to Westminster. Then indeed I began to wonder exceedingly at the mightiness of the great city, where everything was new to me. The crowds going in and out along the streets filled me with amazement, and the great buildings by which I rode made me wonder at their size and appearance. Coming to a halt at the end of the Strand, I was forced

to inquire my way to Westminster, where I intended to lodge, and was presently conducted by a boy past Whitehall to a street over against the ancient Abbey, where I found the home of one Master Goodfellow, who had been recommended to me by Parson Drumbleforth. There I dismissed my guide, and having aided my host in stabling my horse, I sat down to my supper in my lodging, feeling very strange in the middle of that great city where I knew no one.

Now, this Master Goodfellow with whom I had taken up my lodging was a verger at the great Abbey of Westminster, and had been recommended to me as a good Royalist by our vicar, who had known him in times past and had abode with him at the time of his own visit to London in the year 1637. Master Goodfellow was now an ancient man, and looked with much sadness on present events, as he told me while I sat at supper, having begged him to favour me with his

company. Presently, being convinced that I was faithful to the King, he began to tell me such news as he had heard during the day.

"'Tis the army," said he, "that rules everything nowadays, Master Dale, so men are finding out. For, look you, the administration of laws is now but an empty show, for these Roundheads do as they please with every ancient institution. You have not heard what they have done to-day?"

"Nay, sir," I answered, "I am but newly arrived, having ridden straight to your door."

"All London is ringing with the news," he said, shaking his head sadly, "and the sober citizens know not what to make of it. For yesterday, Master Dale, the Commons declared for a reconciliation with the King His Majesty, which they had a right to do, being the lawful representatives of the people. But this was not to the liking of the army, and this morning one of its leaders, Colonel

Pride, went down to the House with a body of men and prevented all such members as were displeasing to the army from entering to their duties. Yea, and now men are saying, Master Dale, that the remainder of the members will obey the army in everything."

Thus indeed matters turned out, for within a week the Commons passed a resolution that the King should be brought to justice, and he was removed from Hurst Castle, where the army had had him in safe keeping, to Windsor, where he was strictly guarded. And after that men were talking at every street corner and in all the alehouses of what would be done with His Majesty.

For the first day or two of my abode in London I did naught but wander about that wonderful city, admiring the strange sights and places of which I had often heard travellers talk. Many a time had I listened

to Parson Drumbleforth as he told Jack and me of the great things he had seen in London town, and now that I saw them for myself, I was bound to confess that our good vicar had not made too much of his story. What London is like at this present time I know not, for I have never been near it since that first visit of mine, and after that it was almost consumed in the Great Fire of 1666, but I have very clear memories of how it looked in the year 1649. So many places of historic interest were there to see, that I hardly knew which way to turn when I set out to view the city, but by Master Goodfellow's advice I first inspected the Tower of London, a great and awful place, strongly guarded and surrounded by impregnable walls and deep moats, and with the Thames running at its south side. At this wonderful place I looked many an hour, only turning from it to admire the great bridge across the river, upon which

houses and shops were built, and at each end of which stood high, battlemented gates furnished with portcullises. From this bridge, too, I watched the river, crowded with ships and vessels of all sorts and of all nations. Or passing from that part of London through crooked, narrow streets, enclosed by high wooden houses, I made my way to the great church of St. Paul, whose spire rose high into the air. Here, too, I was lost in admiration of the famous Cathedral, but I could not avoid thinking that it was not so beautiful as our own York Minster. All round St. Paul's were streets which I was never tired of exploring and wandering in, such as Cheapside and Bread Street, where were many shops and houses of citizens, and inns over whose doors some sign hung to show that accommodation was there provided for man and beast. For city life was quite new to me, and the contemplation of it afforded me much food

for my mind, in which, however, there was always a strong conviction that I much preferred my own homestead and the green fields around it to the crowded and narrow streets of the city.

My admiration did not prevent me from attending to my business, which was to prosecute my claim for compensation from those who had despoiled me of my goods. On the day following that of my arrival I went under Master Goodfellow's directions to Westminster Hall, where I found as many lawyers as would have made a regiment of foot, and by one of these I was directed to some office where such matters as mine were attended to, and where, according to General Cromwell's instructions, I made a presentation of my case. Now, I had thought that I had naught to do but state my grievance and have it redeemed, but I speedily found that there were many formalities to go through before an end came.

For I was sent from one official to another, and from this office to that, so that I grew well sickened of the whole affair, and was minded to return home and forego my claim. But upon reflection I decided that it would be an unmanly thing to let myself be robbed in that way, and I therefore determined to stay and see the matter out. By the time I had arrived at that conclusion, however, it was close on to Christmas, and I was informed that naught could be done for me until the New Year was come. So there I stayed, wanting and yet not liking to go away, and spending my time in walking about London and Westminster seeing such sights as the great city had to show. And I spent my Christmas with Master and Mistress Goodfellow, longing very much on Christmas Day morning for a sight of home and the dear faces I had left there.

Now, when the New Year came, there were new affairs of state to be adjusted,

and these were so important that no man thought of his own business, but watched the great drama which was being played out before his very eyes. I could prosecute my own claim no further, for all the answer I got was that it was under consideration; but though I was anxious to return home, my curiosity about such events as were then happening kept me waiting in London. Those events truly were awful in themselves, for each led to the deposition and execution of the King. On the 1st of January the Commons, or rather that portion of them left by Colonel Pride, appointed a new tribunal, which they called the High Court of Justice, to try the King's majesty on a charge of high treason against his subjects. Four days afterwards the same body put forward a declaration declaring that the people of England were, under God, the source of all just power, and that the Commons, being the representatives duly

elected of the people, had no need of approval from either the House of Lords or the King. On the 9th this High Court of Justice was formally constituted and the trial of the King definitely arranged for.

There were many who all this time doubted that the King would really be put upon his trial, for they held that the sovereign is above the law, and that the army after all would shrink from carrying matters to such extremities. But during the next ten days affairs went forward, and on the 20th His Majesty was brought to Whitehall for his trial. Then indeed London was in a state of great excitement, for it was rumoured by some that the King would be put to death, and by others that he would be banished across seas. As for all those who had been true to His Majesty, their hearts were filled with sorrow to think of his sad condition.

On the morning of the 21st of January

Master Goodfellow and I rose early and made our way to the entrance of the great hall, where His Majesty was to appear before the men who had constituted themselves his judges. There were great crowds about Westminster and Whitehall, and the Roundhead soldiers were assembled in much force, as though to check any demonstration in the King's favour. By dint of hard work and much pushing through the crowds we managed to secure places near to the door by which His Majesty was to enter, and there we abode very uncomfortably for two or three hours, swayed hither and thither by the crowd, the members of which kept up a continual talk and chatter as to what would take place before the judges. As for me, I wished I was well out of it, for I was squeezed and shoved against more than I had a mind for. But at last a great hush fell over the crowd around us, and a way being made by the troopers, there

appeared a small body of guards, in whose midst walked the King. And then for the first time I saw His Majesty Charles the First, in whose cause I had fought and suffered.

Now, there was a perfect stillness as the King came along and the great crowd was motionless, save where some man tried to lift himself high enough to look over the shoulders of those before him. The King held himself very erect, and looked into the faces of the crowd with a calm and serene gaze, so that to me he seemed the very picture of a high-born gentleman, who knew naught of fear nor asked for favour. Yet there were deep lines upon his face, and his hair was thickly sprinkled with grey, and his eyes had a look of suffering in them. And so he and his guards went quickly by, and as they passed there were one or two in the crowd, myself included, who said heartily, "God save your Majesty;" upon

hearing which the King inclined his head in our direction and smiled upon us, and entered the hall. We hung about the entrance that day, listening to such scraps of news as came from the trial-chamber. First we heard that of the hundred and thirty-five members of the court only sixty-seven were present, and that one of these was General Oliver Cromwell. Then came news that when they called on Fairfax to answer his name, his lady answered from the gallery that he was not there and never would be, and that they wronged him to name him. After that we heard that the King, on being called upon to answer the charges brought against him, did deny the authority of that tribunal and refused to plead. Upon that the trial became naught but a formality, for the judges had it all their own way, and finally, on the 27th, they sentenced the King to death.

It was on the morning of the 30th of

January that they beheaded the King before Whitehall. We rose before it was light, and at once made our way across the gardens and parks lying between Westminster and Whitehall, so that we might come near to the scaffold on which His Majesty was to die. This they had caused to be erected in front of the windows of the banqueting-hall, and the carpenters were busy finishing it when we arrived. There were already great crowds of people gathered together, and when the sun rose it shone on as sad a scene as ever I saw. For there was the palace of Whitehall, its roofs slightly covered with snow, and the trees in its gardens and courtyards silvered with frost, and against all this whiteness the black drapery of the scaffold made a dark blot. Then came the soldiers, musketeers, and pikemen, and troopers, stern-faced and resolute, and set themselves to surround the scaffold and to drive the people back from coming too near

it. But I and my companion had worked our way into a corner at the foot of the scaffold, and there we were permitted to remain. And after that an hour went by and the scaffold was empty save for the block that stood in its midst, and the soldiers stood motionless and grim, and the great crowd behind them increased in size until it filled the ground from Charing Cross to Westminster.

At last a window, looking upon the scaffold, was thrown open, and a little group of men stepped out and drew near to the block in the centre. A tall man in dark clothing with a mask over his eyes and nose carried an axe; another similarly attired accompanied him, and with these two were several musketeers and an officer, who posted themselves at the corners of the scaffold. And then a great and awful silence fell upon the crowd, for the King appeared at the open window and stepped

upon the scaffold, followed by the Bishop of London and Colonel Hacker, who had had His Majesty in keeping. The King was calm and confident, and he smiled as he looked up at the sky and let his eye travel across the great multitude, where many a head was bared. He removed the jewel from his neck and handed it to the bishop, to whom he said some last words; then he stretched himself upon the scaffold and the uplifted axe fell swiftly. A deep sigh rose from the great crowd, and there were hundreds around me that uttered sobs and cries.

We were close upon the scaffold. A bright jet of blood spurted across the boards near to me. I raised my kerchief and dipped it in the King's blood, and have it to this day—a memento of that terrible event.

CHAPTER XI.

OF TWO STRANGE MEETINGS IN ONE DAY.

IT was about the middle of the afternoon of that eventful day that I set out from my lodging in Westminster and walked by way of Whitehall towards Charing Cross. Whither I was bound or with what aim I do not now remember; most likely I had neither aim nor definite destination in my mind, but was simply moving about to calm myself, for the scene of the morning had wrought upon me heavily. Whatever most of his friends felt, none of them could exceed me in sympathy for the unfortunate King, and my heart had been further wounded

during the morning by an account of his last interview with his two youngest children, which must indeed have been a bitter matter, and worse to face than the death which so soon followed. All these matters we had spoken of at Master Goodfellow's, until I could bear no longer to talk of the subject, and had gone forth to walk about the city. I was half minded to saddle my horse and ride away from London, for it seemed to me, who from my birth had been trained to pray for the King's good estate, that a curse must rest upon the city that had witnessed his murder. But I reflected that I had a duty to perform to myself and my friends, namely, the recovery of my money, and I resolved to stay a while longer, but made up my mind that if I got no redress within reasonable time, I would go home and trouble myself no more in the matter.

It was beginning to grow dark when I

came over against Whitehall, where groups of people still lingered about the scene of the King's death. The scaffold had by that time been removed, and there were no traces of the terrible scene of the morning. I was hurrying past the banqueting-house, when a man in a cloak came across from the gardens which lie between Whitehall and the river, and walked behind me for a short space. Suddenly his steps quickened, and he gained upon me and tapped me on the shoulder. I turned quickly to look at him. There was an oil lamp burning close at hand, and by its light I saw that the man was General Cromwell. His hat was drawn down over his face, and his uniform was hidden by a large horseman's cloak, but there was no mistaking him when he lifted his head to look at me.

"'Well, farmer,' said he, "I knew you, although I could not see your countenance. There are not many Englishmen that stand

six foot four. Have you finished the business that brought you hither?"

"No, sir," I answered, and stood watching him and wondering what thoughts ran in the mind of this remarkable man, who, in my opinion, had been the chief instrument in bringing about the King's death.

"And how is that? For you have been about your business some time, I think?"

"Two months, sir, all but a day. And indeed I cannot waste more time upon it, and must presently return home and suffer the loss of my money rather than hang about in London."

"Softly, farmer, softly. It will do the Commonwealth no good if its citizens suffer loss. As for your fine of two hundred pounds, that you must lose, being bound for it by reason of your opposition to the nation's welfare, but you shall have returned all that was taken from you over and above."

"Why, sir," said I, "I am much obliged. You would not have me say that I acknowledge the justice of any fine, for I don't, but I shall certainly be glad to have the value of my stock returned to me. But I have been so sent from one office to another, and from this man to that, that I have grown impatient of the whole matter, not being used to aught but plain yes and no until this time."

"Ay," he said, as if talking to himself, "these lawyers with their quibbles and quips. However,—well, but hast thou heard aught from thine own country of late? Thy friends at Pontefract Castle, Master Dale, still hold out against us. Beware, and join them not when you go home."

"Nay, sir," said I, "there is no cause to join them now. If ever I left my farm it was to fight for the King's Majesty."

He looked at me steadfastly and inclined his head.

"And that cause is now gone? Indeed

it is so. Well, man, I respect an honest heart. But come with me a moment."

He laid his hand on my arm and turned me in the direction of a doorway in the side of the palace. We entered and passed along a dark corridor which led to a small court-yard where a picket of soldiers was on duty. From this we passed into a gallery hung with fine pictures such as I had never seen before, and from that through many great apartments richly decorated and looking very vast and magnificent in the dim light, until we paused before a door where stood two pikemen on guard. My companion took a lamp from a table that stood near and advanced to the door, which was thrown open by one of the soldiers.

"Follow me," said Cromwell, and entered the room. I stepped in after him and the man shut the door again.

The apartment was in darkness, and its proportions were so vast that the lamp shed

but little light in it. Cromwell advanced to the centre, and, setting down the lamp upon a table, beckoned me to draw near. And then I saw that upon the table stood a coffin, covered over with a dark-coloured pall. While I wondered what this meant my companion turned the pall back, and I suddenly started with amazement.

"Sir, sir!" I said. "It is the King!"

For truly it was the body of the dead monarch that lay there in the coffin before me. His face was calm and bore no trace of pain; he seemed indeed to be asleep rather than dead. I stood bound to the spot with horror, looking from the dead King's face to the man who had brought me there, and who was beholding his fallen enemy with impassive countenance.

"Yea," said Cromwell at length. "It is the King. The King that betrayed his great trust. Mark you, Master Dale, what fate is in store for a monarch that opposeth the just

demands of his people. Do you know what this day hath done for England and the English nation? It hath made her and them free for ever from tyranny."

"Alas, sir," said I, "I know naught save that he had children that are now weeping his death."

He gave me a swift, deep glance and drew the pall gently back over the dead King's face.

"Yea," he said, "there have been many children weep their father's death of late years, and many fathers that have wept their children's death. Come, let us go."

He took up the lamp and touched the dark pall here and there where it had become disarranged. Then he looked at me curiously.

"Farmer," said he, "you see that we have treated him with all courtesy and respect. What think you, if they had taken off my head outside this morning, and the heads of

my companions, would they have given us decent burial? Alack, more like Tyburn and the gibbet, and the kites to feed upon us."

I remembered that saying in after-years when Charles II. came back to the kingdom, for then they disinterred Cromwell and his friends and subjected their dead bodies to many foolish and cruel indignities.

We passed out again, and he preceded me through the great halls and apartments until we once more came into the space before Whitehall. There he suddenly turned upon me.

"Get you gone home, Master Dale," he said almost fiercely. "You are better in the country than in this city. There are more than you that are longing for a quiet life amongst the woods and fields, but the Lord hath appointed them to other work. Get you gone, get you gone, and keep clean hands and a right spirit. As to your business, it shall be done."

Without another word he turned away sharply and disappeared in the direction of Westminster, while I, full of wonder and excitement at what I had heard and seen, went forward to Charing Cross and along the Strand towards St. Paul's. The streets were thronged with people, and every tongue was discussing the event of the day. The Roundhead soldiery were at every street corner, and bodies of troopers rode about as if in readiness for any rising. Here and there in the crowd was to be seen a Cavalier, distinguished from those among whom he walked by the difference in his garments and his long hair. Such, however, were suffered to pass in silence and unmolested, for the people seemed in no mood to create disturbances that day.

When I came to Ludgate, I was somewhat faint and weary with the excitement I had passed through, and I turned into the inn which has for its sign a holly bush and called

for ale wherewith to refresh myself. In the parlour of the inn there was gathered a numerous company of men, most of them shopkeepers from the surrounding streets, who had come there to drink their glass and smoke their pipe of tobacco. Amongst them I took my seat and listened to the conversation, which ran entirely on the King's execution. When I entered, the whole attention of the company was being given to two men who were arguing the matter with great heat, the one being a tall, dark-visaged person of grave air, and the other a little stout man with a very red face and quick manners.

"But I say," said the little man, "that the King's execution was illegal; yea, and care not who hears me, for 'tis well known I have ever been on the side of the Parliament and am, moreover, a freeman of the City, and have a right to say what I think. Yea, I say 'twas against the liberties of the people, and that I will uphold for ever."

"But thy arguments, dear sir, thy arguments," said the tall man.

"Marry, here they are. As the law stands 'tis the Commons that rule England, which is just law, for as I say, away with Princes and Lords and let the people have their rights. But if the Commons are to rule it must be by a majority of the members. Yea, but what does Colonel Pride do but shut out all such as were unfriendly to the plans made by those in command of the army, so that the remaining members were as wax in the army's hands."

"And rightly," said the tall man, "for the army hath saved England, and could not stand by to see the Commons peril the people's salvation."

"Ay, now, there I am with you," said the little man. "Yea, I am for the army, but what I say is that while the matter was right it was, also, as a nice point of law, illegal."

At this there was a shout of laughter, and the dark-faced man smiled in spite of his gravity.

"Ah, Master Truelove," said he, "I see thou art naught but a stickler for fine points. Thou knowest well enow that we must look to greater issues at a time like this, and not stop hair-splitting until opportunities are lost."

"That is right enough, neighbour," said the little man, not to be beaten out of his argument, "but then, as I say, the matter is—— Hallo, friend, thou seemest to be in some haste."

It was I who interrupted him. I had suddenly leaped to my feet, and my hurried movement upset the tankard at his side. He looked at me with a half-angry, half-curious expression, but I had no time to explain matters to him, and with a hasty expression of regret, I strode across the room and out at the door, where but a

minute sooner I had seen the face of Dennis Watson.

That it was he I had no doubt. I was looking towards the door of the parlour, listening to the talk of the little stout man, when I saw Dennis's head and shoulders appear round the doorpost. He looked cautiously into the room as if in search of some one. His eyes travelled round the company until they met mine; then he gave me one swift glance and drew back his head and vanished.

I was out of the room and in the passage that led to it almost as soon as he disappeared. He was gone, but a serving-wench, bearing a trencher full of tankards, was coming from a room further away, and towards her I darted impetuously. She gave a little scream as she saw me advancing so hastily upon her.

"Nay," said I, "there is naught to be frightened of. Hast seen a man leave this passage just now?"

"A tall young man, master, with black hair?"

"Yes, yes," I cried. "Which way has he gone, girl? Tell me, quick!"

"He went through yon door," she answered, pointing to a door at the end of the passage. "Follow the lane—it will take you to the river."

I had opened the door before she finished speaking, and running into the night, found myself at the head of a long, narrow lane enclosed by houses on either side, the walls of which were so near together that I could have touched them easily by stretching out my arms. At the far end of this lane hung a lamp, the feeble rays of which shed but a small light on the stones beneath it. All the rest of the lane was dark and I could see naught of my quarry, but I heard his feet running swiftly along the pavement, and immediately set off after him. Presently I saw him cross the narrow patch of light

underneath the lamp, and I gave a shout and went forward at a greater speed. In another instant I too had reached the lamp. As I darted into the glare of it, I heard the crack of a pistol and felt a bullet whizz past my ear. I gave a fiercer shout at that and redoubled my speed, and as I ran I heard my enemy's feet sounding before me. The lane was very dark after that, but I ran on, and presently came out on a little wharf alongside the river. There was a lamp burning there, but I could see naught of Dennis, till a gentle splash of the water drew my attention to the river, and then I saw that he had leaped into a boat and was rowing away into the darkness.

Now, I could neither swim nor row, and had never been in a boat in my life, so that I stood on the edge of the water cursing my ill-luck, while my enemy was rapidly disappearing. But as fortune would have it, there just then came along a stout fellow,

who, catching sight of me, made up to my side and asked me if I wanted taking across to Southwark.

"Nay," said I; "but do you see yonder boat—there, just getting out of sight? Follow that and land me where the man who is in it lands, and I will pay you well."

"Jump in here then, master," said he. "There is no better boat than mine on Thames side, nor a stouter pair of arms. Do you keep t'other boat in sight and I'll engage to catch her up."

So we shot out into the darkness, and I strained my eyes to keep sight of Dennis, urging my boatman to row hard, and promising him a liberal reward if he did not allow the other boat to get away from us. For my heart was all afire by that time, and I was resolved that my enemy should not escape me. He was armed and I was not, for I had naught upon me but a stout oak staff which I had carried with me every-

where in London ; but much as this placed me at a disadvantage with him, I was determined that I should settle with him once and for all.

"Are you a sheriff's man, master?" asked the boatman presently, as he strained and tugged at the oars.

"No, friend," I answered. "I am nobody's man. Yonder man is my enemy and he hath done me bitter wrongs, to avenge which I have been seeking him this long time. So pull hard, friend, and don't let him escape me."

"He shall not escape Tom Drewitt," said the man. "Not if he pulled like two men. Do you still see him, master?"

"Yes," I cried. "We are gaining on him. He is altering his course—more to the left."

"He is making for London Bridge, master," said the man, swinging his boat round to the north bank of the river.

"Make your mind easy, we shall reach the stairs as soon as he."

So we went along the dark river, in and out between the craft that lay at rest there, but never once did my eyes leave the boat in front, upon which we were steadily gaining.

CHAPTER XII.

OF THE FATE OF DENNIS WATSON.

SO strongly did Dennis row that he reached the stairs on the north bank of the river close upon the head of the bridge, while we were yet some four boats' lengths away. He leaped from his boat and was at the head of the stair before we reached the foot, and so he disappeared through an archway that gave access to the bridge.

"Quick, friend!" I cried, as I saw my enemy getting beyond my reach. "If he is once out of sight I shall never find him in this great city."

"He is not escaped yet, master," said the

boatman. "He cannot pass the north gate without being observed, and if he turns t'other way you can follow him."

He bent himself earnestly to the oars as he spoke, and in another instant the boat grated against the slimy steps, over which the water was lapping dismally. I was fumbling for my purse when the man followed me from the boat and hooked his craft to a ring in the wall close by.

"Run on, master," said he. "Lord love you, I am all for a bit of adventure myself, and will help you with this matter. Up the stairs and through the archway."

We ran to the head of the steps, and turning through a deep arch in the great wall found ourselves on the bridge immediately beneath the north gate. The keeper had already closed the portcullis, and was seated in his lodge half asleep.

"Rouse him up," said the boatman. "Hallo, Master Grice, are you already

slumbering? Come, has a man passed through the lodge just now?"

"Not this half-hour," answered the keeper, "neither north nor south."

"What, man, bethink thee! One ran through the archway from the river steps but this moment."

"Then a' turned towards Southwark end," said the keeper, and laid his head back against the hood of his chair; "a' came not through my lodge, Tom Drewitt."

"Come," said the waterman. "We waste time there, master. Let us go down the bridge."

We left the lodge and walked quickly away in the direction of the south gate, looking hither and thither as we passed between the houses for some sign of the man we sought. The bridge was but badly lighted, and there were few people on it, for a light snow had begun to fall and the cold air was keen and biting.

"He will probably have turned into one of these houses," said I, by that time despairing of seeing him again.

"Maybe so, master," said the boatman, "but 'tis my opinion that he will have made for the other end of the bridge. Let us get down to the gate as sharply as we can. But stay, let us use some little craft in our design. Do you, master, walk first and make straight for t'other gate, and I will come after at a few paces' distance."

In this way we pressed forward, I going first, grasping my staff and looking narrowly into every nook and corner as I passed. I felt sure that we had lost Dennis, for the doors of several shops and houses stood open, and there was naught easier than for him to run inside one of them and hide himself until we had gone by. It was impossible for us to search every house; but even if we had done so, the buildings were so full of holes and corners that our man might have hid

in one room while we were seeking him in another. Great wooden houses they were on that bridge, with high gables that projected over the roadway beneath, so that the eaves formed a sort of shelter and kept rain and snow from those who walked beneath them.

I had reached the centre of the bridge and was beginning to redouble my pace, when a shout from the boatman brought me to a halt. As I turned he ran up, pointing to the door of a tavern which stood open on our right hand.

"He came out from there as you passed," said the man, "and when I shouted he ran across the bridge and into yon door"—pointing to a house opposite the inn. "So now, master, we have him caged."

"Will he escape at the back?" I said.

"Not unless he goes into the river," answered the boatman. "Come, we have him now. He has closed the door behind him, but we will soon remedy that."

Saying this, he advanced to the house in which Dennis had taken refuge, and began to knock loudly at the door, to which there presently came an old man, who opened it and looked fretfully out at us.

"What do you beat my door so violently for?" he asked, regarding us with anything but favourable glances.

"We are sorry to disturb you, master," said I, "but there is a man run into your house just now whom we are in pursuit of, so we will thank you to let us search for him."

When I said that the old man looked at us more suspiciously than ever, and shook his head as if he had no trust in our tale.

"There is no man run into my house," said he, and made as if he would shut the door in our faces. But the boatman, not to be outdone, placed his foot within the threshold and began to push his way in. Now, at this the old man set up a violent clamour, calling for help, and shouting to those near

at hand that thieves were breaking into his house, so that we presently found ourselves in the centre of a crowd, every member of which was asking at the same time what all the uproar was about.

"Friends," said I, trying to quiet the old man, who was still calling out that we were thieves and designed to rob him, "we are peaceable men enough, and have no intention of robbing anybody. We are in pursuit of a man who must be punished for his misdeeds, and we followed him upon the bridge here and have traced him to this house, into the open door of which he ran but a few minutes ago. Because we want to search for him this ancient gentleman calls us thieves."

"What hath the man done?" asked several near me.

"As much wickedness as half a dozen ordinary men, sir," said I, "and hath robbed his own father into the bargain."

"Give the rogue no quarter," said a great,

burly man. "Come, let them in, Master Bradley; 'tis poor work standing against justice. What, man! they will do thy house no harm."

"I saw no man run into my house," said the old gentleman. "If any man entered he hath run up the stairs."

"Let us turn him out of his hole," said the big man. "Keep an eye on the windows some of you, lest he escape that way. Robbed his father, quotha! Alack, a rope is too good for such."

We pressed forward and entered the house and ran up the stairs, some going into one room and some into another, while the old man toiled behind us, wringing his hands and begging us not to harm his goods. But in none of the sleeping chambers, nor in any nook or corner on the stairs, could we find a trace of Dennis. I made my way to the windows overlooking the river, and, pushing the casement open, looked out. Underneath

me at a great distance lay the water, splashing and lapping the piles of the bridge, with here and there a faint gleam of light reflected from the lamps which gleamed through the windows of the houses. There was no way by which he could have escaped in the rear of the house. We turned to the last flight of stairs, which seemed to lead into the roof of the house, and terminated in a trap-door. Up these we pushed, only to find the trap closed and evidently barred from above.

"I warrant me he hath run up here and bolted down the trap-door," said the burly citizen, who was blowing and panting at my side. "He thinketh to escape by the roofs, no doubt. He—— God's mercy, what voice is that?"

A great shout came up from the people who had gathered on the bridge below.

"They see something," said the boatman. "To the windows!"

We scrambled down the ladder, and run-

ning to the window which looked upon the bridge, threw it open and pushed out our heads. Then we saw that the road beneath was full of people, and that they were all looking up to the roof of the house opposite that which we had entered, where stood Dennis Watson, who had evidently leaped across the gulf that yawned between, and was now bracing himself for a climb along the tiles on the other side.

"Ah!" said the boatman, "I see what he is after, master. He is making for the rear of the tavern, where there is a stair which leads to the river. There are always boats fastened to the pier underneath the tavern, and he will go down the stair and escape in one."

And with that he ran down to the bridge and made for the inn, while I and the men that had followed us in remained at the window watching my enemy's movements. He was climbing along the roof of the

opposite house with very careful steps, for the tiles and the woodwork were slippery with snow, and the roof sloped dangerously. Presently he came to a part where there was naught to hold by, and rose to his feet and balanced himself on the uncertain edge of the roof. When I saw him in this perilous position I was minded to shout to him to return and meet me in fair fight, for I had no wish to see him dash himself to pieces. But before I could open my lips there was a sudden gust of icy wind blew down the river and caused him to stagger. His foot seemed to slip on the snow-covered roof; he made a great effort to recover his balance; then he slipped further and further, and finally fell over the edge of the gable, and came to the bridge beneath with a heavy sound that turned me sick.

"He hath escaped you, master," said the big man at my side. "He is gone where you cannot catch him."

We hurried down the stairs and found a crowd surrounding the body. Dennis Watson was dead enough, for he had fallen some fifty feet and lighted upon his head. Bitterly as he had wronged me and mine, I could not avoid feeling sorry for him as I saw him lying there with the folks pushing their way through the crowd to stare at him. But there was little time for feelings of that sort, for the watch had now appeared on the scene, and when they had removed the dead man's body I was forced to go with them and say what I knew about him, upon which business I was detained some time, and did meanwhile learn some particulars concerning Dennis Watson's history since the time of his flight from our neighbourhood. For it seemed that the people of the inn to which his body was carried were somewhat acquainted with him, and reported that when he first used to come to their house he was gaily dressed, and did make much show of

money and led a dissolute life, but that of late he had lived a precarious existence, and had been suspected of being concerned in the doings of a band of thieves who infested the riverside. From which news I gathered that the money he had stolen from his father had done Dennis Watson no good, and that he had been amply punished for that and all his other misdeeds. Now, they found no money on his body and were for burying him like a pauper, but I did not like to think that the son of a Yorkshire yeoman should have no better burial than what is given to a dog, and I accordingly paid for his grave myself and saw him decently interred, having no quarrel with him now that he was dead.

I was busied with these matters during the next two days, but on the 2nd of February, being the third day after the King's execution, I said farewell to Master Goodfellow and his wife and set forth upon

my journey homeward, being well satisfied to depart from London, which great city I admired vastly, but had no very pleasant memories of. You may be sure that I was glad enough at the thought of seeing Dale's Field and my dear love again, and as I rode along the road I made up my mind that we would waste no more time, but call Parson Drumbleforth's services into requisition and be married out of hand. And that done I would leave my home no more, neither for King nor Commons, but would attend to my business and find my pleasure in my own land and my own house as a yeoman should. For by that time I had had enough of war and turmoil and of adventures here and there, and it seemed to me that there was naught like a quiet life. And therewith I fell at meditating on what General Cromwell had said to me about there being other folk than myself that did desire to live peaceably on their farms but were called to other things,

and I decided that such were more to be pitied than envied.

I spent the first night of my homeward journey at Hitchin, and went forward the next day to Huntingdon, where I slept the second night, and until this point I met with no adventure worth recording. As for the talk at the inns, it was of naught but the King's death, respecting which every man was willing to converse, but few to venture an opinion. I said naught on the matter, being anxious to escape questions which would certainly have been showered upon me if I had admitted that I was present at the scene before Whitehall. That scene indeed was never out of my mind, and I dreamed of it more than once during the next few weeks.

On the third day of my journey, when I was drawing near to Peterborough, I saw before me on the roadside the figure of a man who lay stretched out on the bank as

if he were ill or dead, while his horse stood near him cropping the grass. It was a cold, raw afternoon, and I immediately concluded that the man had fallen from his horse and was now insensible, or he would never lie there in such peril of his life. So I rode up to him, and, dismounting, bent down to see what it was that ailed him. There was something familiar in his countenance, but I took little heed of it at the moment, for the man was insensible and blue with cold, and looked death-like to my mind. Now, I had in my saddle-bag a small flask of strong waters which Mistress Goodfellow had pressed upon me, and I immediately produced this and poured a little of its contents between the man's lips. At first there seemed to be no effect, but presently he sighed deeply and opened his eyes somewhat, so that I redoubled my exertions and strove hard to bring him to. While I was thus engaged I had leisure to study his face, and

then I saw that he was the man who had knocked at the door of the wayside inn between Aberford and Castleford, and had manifested such uneasy symptoms at sight of me.

In a few minutes the man opened his eyes and looked at me. The light was already failing, but it was sufficiently strong to allow of his recognizing me, and again I saw the horrified look come into his face which I had first seen when I opened John Sanderson's door to him that morning after my release from the Parliamentarians' camp before York. It was a look of such fear as I never saw on any other man's face, and was all the worse to me because I did not understand it.

"Come, master," said I, "there is no need to look so frightened; I am neither thief nor cut-throat, and desire naught but your good. Have you fallen from your horse that you lie here like this?"

"Ay," said he, faintly. "I am ill, dying,

sir, I think, this three days. Ride on, good sir, and leave me."

"Nay, friend," I answered, "I shall not leave you till you are in some safe hands. Come, we are but a mile or two out of Peterborough, so let me help you to your horse and I will walk by your side till we reach the town."

And therewith I raised him up and made him take another drink of the strong waters, and so got him to his horse at last, and walked by his side to support him, leading my own horse by the bridle. In this way we went forward to Peterborough, the man now and then groaning with pain, and at times looking at me with the same look of fear in his face which had come there as soon as he had opened his eyes and seen me bending over him.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF THE STRANGE MAN'S CONFESSION.

BY the time we reached the inn where I had stayed when I passed through Peterborough on my journey to London, the stranger's illness was much increased, so that it was all I could do to keep him upright upon his horse. The host of the inn was at first opposed to admitting him; for the man, he said, looked like death, and he wanted no death in his house. Upon my promising to pay him well for whatever trouble he and his were put to, he altered his tone, and we presently carried the sick man to a chamber which they had hastily

made ready for him, and there he was laid in bed while the ostler went to seek the apothecary.

Having thus seen my charge comfortably disposed of, I made my way to the inn parlour and gave orders for my supper, for which I had gotten a keen appetite. While they made it ready I fell a-musing by the hearth, my mind being full of the strange events of the last few days. Never had I passed through such exciting incidents as those which occurred on the day of the King's execution. To see His Majesty suffer was terrible enough, but I think the death of Dennis Watson had moved me even more than the scene before Whitehall. For bitterly as he had wronged me, and bound as I was to punish him, I could not help reflecting upon the change which had come over him since the time he left his father's house. In the old days he had been a fine-looking man, whom the maidens

were wont to admire for his handsome countenance, and at that time I do not think he would have run away from me or from any other man. But when I saw him dead at my feet I noticed that his good looks were gone, and his face was worn and discoloured by hard living and drinking, and his hair was thickly shot with grey; and I reflected that he had not had spirit to meet me fairly, but must needs fly from me like a thief, whereby he met his ignominious death. Yet his old craft and malice had been strong in him till the end, for he had striven to shoot me as I followed him down the dark alley. However, he was now dead, and had come to his end in a shameful manner, and so he would never more trouble me or mine.

While I thus mused the apothecary came downstairs from visiting the sick man and made his way to me. He was a short, stout gentleman, carrying a snuff-box in his hand,

the lid of which he frequently tapped while he was speaking. He took a seat near me and spread out his plump legs to the fire.

"Your friend, sir," said he, "is very sick. How long hath he been in his present state?"

"Indeed, sir," I answered, "I know little more about him than you do. I found him lying by the roadside two miles away, with all his senses gone, and had hard work, I assure you, to get him to his horse again."

"Then he is no friend of yours?" said he.

"No," said I. "I once saw him, some four years ago, at a wayside inn, but more than that I know not. I neither know his name nor where he comes from, nor where he was going."

"Ah," said the apothecary. "Well, sir, the man is going to die. He will be dead before the afternoon is over."

"Yea," said the landlord, who had come over to where we sat. "That is just what

I said. However, master, you will see that I am paid for my trouble?"

"I shall keep my word," I answered, and set to work at my supper, which was just then placed before me.

"I can do naught for the man," said the apothecary. "So if you will pay me my fee, master, I will go home again."

And therewith, having got his money, away he went, and I was left with the sick man on my hands and the prospect of being delayed a day or two on my journey. This was not agreeable to my wishes, but I remembered that I could not have left the man on the roadside to die, so I ate my supper in peace and resolved to see the matter out.

When the apothecary had gone his ways, I had persuaded the hostess to go up to the sick man's chamber and stay with him, for it seemed hard to me that he should be left alone when death was so near him. So

away she went, but came back before I had finished eating to tell me that the man was in a sad way and wished to speak with me at once.

Upon entering the chamber in which we had put him to bed I found the sick man sitting upright against his pillow. His senses had now come back to him, and he seemed as much alive to what was going on around him as I was. But when I drew near to the bedside and inquired what I could do for him, the same look of horror and fear came into his eyes which I had noticed on other occasions, and he shrank away from me as though he feared that I was going to strike him.

"Now, friend," said I, speaking as kindly as I knew how, because he was a dying man, "what can I do for you?"

He opened his lips to speak, and then closed them again and gasped for breath, his eyes all the time keeping themselves

fixed on me with the same frightened look.

"Come," I said, "there is no need for fear. Tell me what you want and I promise you shall have it."

"Alas, Master Dale," said he, "you are very kind to me, and I deserve none of your kindness. Sir, fetch me some clergyman and let me talk to him. I cannot die until I have eased my mind."

"If that be all," I answered, "your wishes shall be gratified on the instant;" and I went down to the host and told him what was desired.

"Why, now," said he, "let me see, there is Master Budgett and Master Brewer, that are both godly men and have their churches close at hand."

"Let it be Master Brewer," said the hostess. "'Tis an elderly man and hath the prettiest way with him, sir, at a death-bed. La, now, our Marian shall run for his

reverence in a trice, and I lay he will come at once, whether he be at prayers or meat."

So the girl ran straightways for good Master Brewer, and I went back to the sick man, who sat plucking at the bed-clothes with his fingers.

"There," said I, "we have sent for a clergyman and he will come to you presently, so you may make yourself easy on that score;" and therewith I sat down in the window to wait until the parson came, so that the man might not be alone. But all the while I sat there he said no word, only his eyes continually rested on me, and his fingers never ceased plucking at the sheets.

Now, the girl Marian let no grass grow under her feet, but ran quickly to Master Brewer's vicarage, which was not many hundred feet away, so that but a few minutes passed before the hostess came up the stairs and ushered the worthy vicar into the sick man's presence.

"This way, your reverence," quoth she. "Alas! the poor gentleman hath been very particular to see your reverence and talk with you for his soul's health. Pray God he make a good end—as indeed he cannot fail to do with your reverence to attend him. But here is the poor gentleman—how do you find yourself now, sir?—so I will leave your reverence to talk with him for his benefit."

"Good mistress," said I, for she showed no signs of suspending her remarks, "let us go downstairs, as you say, and leave this good gentleman and the sick man alone together;" and therewith I got her out of the chamber and conducted her downstairs, so that the parson and the stranger should be private.

"Alack!" quoth she, as we reached the parlour, "I fear me the poor man is not long for this world. Will it be a crowner's quest matter, think you, master?"

"Nay, mistress, I cannot say. The man is not dead yet."

"An a' hath not death in a's face I never saw one that had," said the host. "Yea, and may think a's self lucky that a' died not by the roadside."

While the clergyman was occupied with the sick man I sat in the chimney-corner and smoked a pipe of tobacco, which habit I had contracted during my stay in London, having been inducted into it by Master Goodfellow. For many a time when I was in that great city I felt lonely and needed something to warm my heart, for which complaint Master Goodfellow recommended tobacco-smoking as being a capital remedy. And such I truly found it, and carried home with me a great supply of that blessed herb, which is one of man's chiefest treasures, whatever King James may have said to the contrary.

Now, Master Brewer was engaged with

the dying man for a long time, so that I smoked two pipes, and was just thinking of filling a third, when he came down the stairs and approached me. Then I noticed that his face was very grave, and that he looked at me narrowly, as if he wished to know what manner of man I was.

"Let us go into some private room, Master Dale," said he. "I have something of consequence to say to you."

"Come you into the little parlour, your reverence," said the landlady. "I warrant you might talk secrets there for a month o' Sundays without any one being the wiser."

So into the little parlour we went and closed the door, and the clergyman, who was old and grey, and not unlike our own parson in soberness of appearance, turned to me.

"Master Dale," said he, still looking gravely at me, "Master Dale, I trust you are a Christian man."

"Why, sir," said I, "I trust I am, though I dare say there is room for improvement in me. Certainly I have always tried to do my duty."

"You will need to exercise a very Christian virtue," said he, "when you hear what I have got to tell you."

"What virtue is that, your reverence?"

"The virtue of forgiveness, Master Dale. Yon poor soul, that is near drawing his last breath, would have you forgive him before he goes before his Great Judge."

"Would have me forgive him, sir? Alas! the poor soul, he is out of his mind. He hath never injured me."

"Are you so sure of that? Is there no wrong ever done to you and yours which presents itself to your mind?"

"No, sir," I said, shaking my head. "I cannot say that there is—at least, not that this man could have aught to do with. The poor man must be out of his mind, your

reverence. I have seen him but twice in all my life, and upon each of those occasions he manifested lively fear of me—why, I know not."

"Master Dale, look back. Is there nothing in your past life that is as yet an unsolved riddle? Did it never strike you that this man had some reason for showing such signs of fear when he set eyes upon you?"

"Sir," I answered, "I am, I dare say, very stupid and thick-headed, and, to tell the truth, I troubled myself very little about the man and his fancies."

"Did it never strike you that he feared you because of your extraordinary resemblance to some other person?"

"The only man, sir, that I resemble was my own father, who was my very image. But why should that make the man afraid? I dare say he has seen my father at some time or other, but why should my

resemblance to him frighten the poor soul?"

"Why, indeed? Because of a guilty conscience. Master Dale, be strong to hear what I have to tell you. The man who is dying in yonder chamber is—your father's murderer!"

My father's murderer! The words sounded in my ears as if they were not real. The walls seemed to fall away from me, my brain went round in a sickening whirl. I stretched out my arms to save myself from falling.

"Come, Master Dale, be brave, and quit you like a Christian man. Oh, I promise you this most unfortunate wretch hath paid dearly for his fell crime."

"Sir, sir!" I cried. "I cannot believe it—it seems impossible. What had my father done to offend this villain?"

"Alas! naught. Master Dale, the man upstairs was paid to murder your father by

one who was your father's enemy—Rupert Watson."

At last! Thank God, the secret was out at last! Now I knew whom I had to thank for the foul deed that made me fatherless and my mother a widow. Whose hand it was that fired the fatal shot mattered little: I knew at last, after all those years of waiting, whose devilish malice it was that prompted the deed; I knew in whose evil mind the devilish plans were worked out and put in operation. It was as I had always thought. There was no surprise in my mind at the news. But at last I knew my enemy without doubt or question, and could go to my revenge with a clear purpose.

My mind was clear once more, my nerves strung themselves like quivering steel. I moved to the door.

"Where are you going, Master Dale?" asked the clergyman.

"To the magistrate, sir, ere yonder villain dies."

"Master Dale, bethink you. This is no time for earthly feelings of revenge. The man is dying."

"Sir, if he were at the very gates of hell, and the evil one were waiting to receive him, he should not escape me now! On my dead father's body I swore to God in Heaven that whoever had part or lot in that foul murder should account to me for it with their lives. Shall I forget my vow? God forbid!"

"Alas! Master Dale, your words are hard. Oh, my son, think, I pray you, of the terrible bar before which this unhappy wretch must shortly plead. What is any earthly tribunal in comparison with that of God? What good purpose can you serve by tormenting your father's murderer for an hour or two before death seizes him? Master Dale, this unhappy man hath made full con-

fession to me of his whole life, and hath charged me with the duty of imploring your forgiveness. Already you have heaped coals of fire upon his head by your good treatment of him."

"Sir," said I, "an he had been my worst enemy, Rupert Watson himself, I should have done no less for him. But justice must surely be done on such as he. Think of the foul deed he did."

"I think of naught else, Master Dale, and it is because his sin hath been so great that I plead for your great forgiveness. Will you not die easier yourself for the knowledge that you forgave all your enemies?"

Before I could answer him there came a great knocking at the door, and the hostess entered, looking very scared, and begged us to go up to the man at once, for he was at his last gasp.

We entered the room, I with such feelings at my heart as I cannot describe. The man

lay gasping for breath; his eyes were closed and his face was covered with great drops of sweat. We bent over him; he suddenly opened his eyes and saw me, and across his features there came the same look of awful fear. He half raised himself in his bed and made as if he would speak; then he fell back dead, and so passed to his great account.

That night Master Brewer told me such particulars as the dead man had desired him to make known to me, and thus I learnt the true history of my father's murder. The man in his youth had been a wild and lawless character, and had committed many crimes, for which the law had punished him in various ways. At the York assizes, whereat our case with Rupert Watson was tried, he had been charged with horse-stealing, and had gotten off. Riding southward from York, he had fallen in with Rupert, who found him a willing abettor of the foul plot he had devised as he followed my father homeward.

At Ferrybridge Rupert had shown him the man he wished to slay, and thereupon the murderer rode forward to the lonely piece of road where he lay in wait for and slew my father, being at that time of such a disposition that murder was naught to him. But if all that he confessed to Master Brewer were true, he had been punished hard enow for his sins in the years that followed that horrible deed.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF OUR PREPARATIONS FOR THE WEDDING.

I ENTERED upon the final stages of my homeward journey with very different feelings from those which had filled me when I left London. When I rode away from Master Goodfellow's house I thought of little else than the gladness of being at home once more with the dear familiar faces of my friends around me. But when I left Peterborough I had no thought of them or of the joys of reaching home again. All I wanted and all I thought of was to come at Rupert Watson and settle my account with him. My heart was filled with impatience because

of him. Every mile seemed the length of three miles, and never until then had I dealt so unsparingly with my horse. I pushed forward at a quicker rate than when I had ridden southwards; and though I was forced to stay one night at Newark, I got no benefit from it, for I spent the hours in walking my chamber floor, and was in the saddle again long before the people of the inn were stirring.

Until that time, indeed, I had never known what it was to be so completely filled with the passion of revenge that there was no room for any other feeling or thought in my heart. So resolved was I to do justice to my father's murderer that I put everything else out of my mind. I thought of the sorrow brought upon me and mine by that foul deed. I recalled every incident of the horrible scene on the snow-covered highway, until the picture became present to my eyes and would not be shut out. I saw my father

laid rigid and lifeless in the snow, myself bending over him in an agony of fear and grief, while the horses stood by with their heads bent towards us as if they shared in my sorrow. I saw my mother standing in the open doorway with the warm firelight glowing behind her, and remembered the awful woe that stole like a shadow across her face as she heard the news of her husband's murder. These matters filled my mind to the exclusion of every other thought as I rode homewards, and above them rose a fierce determination to meet Rupert Watson and pay him the debt I had owed him for all those years.

It was about the middle of the afternoon when I got my tired horse up the hill out of Wentbridge and came in sight of the tall chimneys of my house. I had grown in impatience as I drew near home, but my horse, wearied by the hard work I had given him, had turned lame, and it was all I could

do to push him forward over the last two or three miles. If I had never met the strange man and had never learnt his secret, I should have had no other thought, on the nearing my house, but of my sweetheart and the pleasure of reaching home again. But with that story in my breast I could think of none of those things. Not a single thought of Rose nor of home-coming was in me as I drew near to Dale's Field. My heart was dead to all but its one desire.

I drew rein at the orchard gate and dismounted. As I lifted the latch Ben Tuckett, who was busied in the fold, caught sight of me and came over the wall to welcome me.

"Well met, lad!" said Ben, his face all aglow at the sight of me. "Thou art come at a good time. There is Parson Drumbleforth in the house, and it is not five minutes since we were all talking of thee and wondering when thy travels would come to an end. All is well, thank God, and we have

been as quiet as mice since thou didst ride away. But now let me take thy horse and get thee into the house. Hah! thou seest the lasses have already caught sight of thee."

And so they had, and now came running out of doors to meet me, with the vicar following in their rear. Then for one moment I forgot the black sorrow that was eating out my heart, for what man could resist loving looks and the welcome of rosy lips and bright eyes? But when I had greeted them all round and followed them into the house, the passion that filled me asserted itself again, for it seemed to me that the place was filled with memories of my dead father, and that his ghost cried in my ears for vengeance on his murderers.

Presently in came Ben, full of talk as usual, and began to question me. But quick as his tongue wagged I heard naught of it, being lost in those sad memories, so that at last he ceased to speak and sat staring at me

in wonder. Then I saw that the girls were watching me with surprised looks, and that Parson Drumbleforth regarded me with a wistful glance, as if he wondered what ailed me.

"Beshrew me, Will!" said Ben, suddenly breaking the silence, "what is the matter with thee? Hast not had a smile for one of us since thou didst ride in at the gate, nor a word either. Here we have been talking to thee, and questioning thee, and begging for news of what thou hast seen and heard, and there thou standest and takest no heed. Hast seen a ghost, man, that thou lookest so strangely!"

Then I came to my wits and begged their pardon, and told them that I was glad enough to see them all again, and would tell them all my news when I had gotten a terrible weight off my mind. And then, while they all stood round with wondering faces, I told them all that I had learned concerning my father's death.

"So now," I said, when I had come to the end of my story, "you see why I looked and behaved in such a manner. Indeed, I can neither eat nor drink nor sleep until I have met my father's murderer face to face. Let me see my vengeance satisfied and I shall be myself again."

"Lad, lad!" said Parson Drumbleforth, "remember what is said in Holy Writ. 'Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.' Truly He will give to every man according to his deeds."

I turned my face away impatiently. I was in no mood for conversation of that sort. Holy Writ or no Holy Writ, nothing on earth should cheat me of my revenge.

"That is all very well, sir," I answered, somewhat impatiently, for I was in no mood for counsel. "But I vowed to God at my dead father's side that I would avenge his murder, and now no power in heaven or earth shall prevent me."

"God forgive thee thy impious words, lad," said the old man. "Thou art young and of hot blood, and dost not think of what thou art saying. Will, Will, what can vengeance of thine do? Can it bring the dead to life? Can aught that thou canst invent of torture equal the horrors of conscience which yonder guilty wretch hath carried in his bosom all these years? Remember, lad, that we are commanded to forgive all our enemies, even as we would be forgiven."

"Sir, sir!" I cried, being wellnigh stung to madness by the conflicting passions in my breast. "You are asking more of me than man can do. If I were a saint I might forgive, but I am a man. Forgive? Not till I have seen him suffer for his crime. Yea, and then it would be harder than I could bear."

"Canst thou not trust in God to punish thy enemy?"

"Let God make me the means! Sir, you mean well, but I will not be put off from my work. Whether it be the will of God or not, naught but death shall stay me from this matter."

I moved towards the door, but before I reached it I turned back. Over the great fireplace hung the pistols which my father had carried on that fatal ride from York. One of them was stained with his blood. I took it down and loaded it carefully, while the rest stood round with never a word to say. Then I put it inside my coat and turned to the door.

With my hand on the latch there came a touch on my arm. I looked down and saw Rose looking pleadingly at me. Her eyes were full of entreaty.

"For my sake, dear Will! Listen to what the vicar says. For my sake!" She had never looked one-half so beautiful as at that moment, and the touch of her gentle hands

about me almost drove me to repent of my fierce anger. But then my hand touched the pistol stained with my father's blood, and my passion welled up again with tenfold force. I put her from me gently but firmly.

"Not even for thy sake, dear heart!" I groaned. "Not even if thy love were the price I must pay."

And with that I raised the latch and would have left them and gone on my mission, for my feelings had overpowered me and turned me into a murderer. But the vicar cried, "Stay!" in a loud voice, and I paused and stood staring him.

"Lad," said he, solemnly, lifting his hand as he spoke—"lad, thou couldst not trust in God to avenge thee. Learn, then, that while thou wert speeding hither to wreak thy vengeance, God's hand hath forestalled thee. The vengeance of God hath already fallen. Rupert Watson is beyond thy reach!"

"Dead!"

I scarcely knew my own voice as I cried out. It was a voice of baffled rage, of passion that had fed on itself and found itself baulked of its purpose.

"Dead to thee. Dead to repentance. Dead—unless God give him grace—to any chance of atoning for his sins. Go, Will, go across yonder woods to Castle Hill. Ask for thy enemy. Thou wilt find an old man, blind, deaf, and mad. He hath lost sight, hearing, and senses."

Then a mist swam before my eyes, and I sank into a seat and hid my face. Truly the hand of God had been beforehand with me, and had taken from me the work I had set myself to do. And so my father was avenged; and I learnt that, whether men believe it or not, there is naught done in this world, either good or evil, the results of which do not in time come back to the doer.

After my return home some weeks passed

by in an uneventful manner. The Royalists were still defending Pontefract Castle against General Lambert and the Parliamentarians, having proclaimed Charles II. as soon as they heard of the death of Charles I. Jack Drumbleforth was with them, and naught had been seen or heard of him since I set out for London. By the beginning of March in that year, 1649, the defenders of the Castle saw that they had no chance of holding out against the Roundheads, and they began a series of negotiations with the besiegers, the result of which was that the Castle was finally surrendered to the Parliament before the end of the month. It was the last place in England to hold out for the King, and after its surrender, the victorious army resolved that it should no more be available against their cause, for they demolished it with no mercy, so that it is now naught but a great heap of ruins.

So now the land in our neighbourhood was

fairly quiet, and the townsfolk in Pontefract began to repair the damage done to their property during the course of the siege. Things began to assume their old appearance, and life was pretty much what it was before the war broke out. Then Ben Tuckett grew restless and uneasy, and finally declared that he would go home and repair his house, and buy in a new stock, and devote himself to his own trade once more.

"And when my house is all ready, Will," said he, "we will be married, and I will take Lucy home, for indeed it is high time we were settled down to the sober business of life. I think the wars are safely over, and that I may dig up my money from under the hearthstone."

So it was duly settled amongst us that we would be married on the coming Easter Monday, and thereupon everything was bustle and preparation for the wedding. As for Ben, he went away to his home in the

Market-place at Pontefract, and inspected the damage it had suffered during the siege, which was not quite so great as he had feared, though a cannon-shot had indeed passed through the roof and caused much falling of bricks and mortar. Honest Ben, however, set to work with a right good will, and laboured so hard that his house speedily resumed something of its ancient air of solid respectability. When the outside was finished and the whole place made weather-tight, Ben moved into it his furniture, which had been carried over to Dale's Field when he went into the Castle, and with it was sent such things as my mother had promised Lucy against her marriage, these being matters of chairs and tables and bedding, together with such piles of linen as you would have thought they could never wear out. Then there was much arranging of chambers and parlours, and Lucy and Rose were at Ben's house for a day together, so

that finally Ben was in a grand state of readiness to receive his bride.

As for me, there were no great preparations to make at Dale's Field, for the house was already fitted for its new mistress. There was not a corner of it that she did not know by that time, nor an acre of the surrounding fields and meadows that she had not crossed in company with me. The old place was as familiar to her as to me, and when she came home from church with me on the wedding day it would only be in name that there would be any difference in the new mistress of Dale's Field. Yet those last few weeks before our marriage seemed long to me, who had waited a long time for my love and had often been parted from her for long intervals. Bit by bit, however, they slipped away, and at last the day drew near which was to make us one.

Now, all that week before the wedding they were as busy as bees at Dale's Field,

for there was the wedding dinner to think for and provide, and Jacob Trusty insisted on having the great barn cleared for a dance and a supper to the men and their families, and Timothy Grass worked hard to have the garden put in order, and the maids scrubbed and swept until neither Ben nor I could find a corner wherein to rest our weary limbs. Much of that week, indeed, we spent at Pontefract with the tailor, who was making us exceeding fine raiment wherein to be married. The tailor, indeed, was as busy a man as you could have found in the three kingdoms that week, for he was also making new garments for Jack Drumbleforth and Tom Thorpe, who were going to act as best men. But with all this business and preparation it was a long week, and seemed to move with tender feet until Easter Sunday dawned upon us.

CHAPTER XV.

OF MY LAST MEETING WITH RUPERT WATSON.

IT was one of the most beautiful days I ever remember to have known, that Easter Sunday of 1649, for it was all sunshine and springing of flowers, and yet it went by surely in slower fashion than ever day did before. I was out and about early in the morning, and found the dew lying bright on the grass and the sunlight flooding the woods and meadows that stretch before my house. The trees were bursting into new leaf, and the garden—looking very smart and trim, thanks to Timothy Grass—was gay with primrose and crocus. I wandered

about the fold and the buildings, thinking of what great happiness the morrow was to bring me, until the house door opened and Ben Tuckett came out and joined me.

"Heigho!" said Ben. "It seems a long time until to-morrow, Will. Would that old Father Time could jog on a little faster!"

"Have patience, Ben," said I. "'Twill soon be noon, and soon it will be night, and then morning will dawn again and the great day will arrive."

"Yea," he answered, "but these last few hours seem exceeding long. I do not think I have slept three hours this night, and I am very sure I shall not sleep at all this coming night, for I shall lie awake considering of my new responsibilities. 'Tis a serious matter, this marrying business, Will."

"Art thou afraid?"

"Marry, not I. But for all that 'tis, as I say, a serious thing. Thou seest, a man till

he marries hath but himself to care for, but when he is wed he never knows to what extent his care will go. However, I am willing enough to offer myself a victim at the altar."

"I believe you, Ben. You have been a faithful wooer."

"Ever since I was a lad and used to come home with thee at holiday times. Yea, I have served my apprenticeship to this same love for as many years as Jacob served for Rachel. But the last days of the apprenticeship go very slowly, lad, and I would it were to-morrow and Parson Drumbleforth had tied us up as securely as ring and book can do it."

Not all the wishing in the world, however, could make the day go a whit faster, and we were fain to get it over in such patience as we could. For my own part, I would have spent it in wandering about my land, alone with my own thoughts, but Rose and Lucy

were for going along the road to church, and insisted upon Ben and myself accompanying them. Now, Ben was not quite easy on this point, for it was the day of reading out the banns, and he was somewhat afraid of hearing his own name announced in such a pointed fashion amongst a congregation that would certainly be much interested. I was not without some dismay at the prospect myself, and had absented myself from Divine Service for two Sundays running on those very grounds. The girls, however, had no fears on this point and would hear no objection that we could make.

"Not go to church indeed!" said Lucy. "Am I, then, going to marry a heathen? What would the vicar say an he missed your face to-day, Master Benjamin? So go straightways and put on your best coat and lose no time, for I can hear the bells ringing now."

"And what shall I do, and where shall I

look," said poor Ben, "when the parson reads out our names? I shall feel fit to drop through the floor. Everybody will look at me. I can stand a good deal, but to have a churchful of folk staring at me as if I were a prize bullock is more than a man ought to stand."

"Will they not stare at you to-morrow?" cried Lucy. "Quick, I say, and make ready to go with us. Surely if we can stand hearing the banns read out, you ought to."

So away we all went, and on coming into the village street at Darrington fell in with many of our acquaintance, who wished us joy and happiness so heartily that the girls blushed for pleasure, and Ben hung down his head and looked as if he were a criminal that had been caught in the commission of some awful deed. It was indeed very hard on Benjamin that the girls had insisted on his presence at church that morning, for the nave and aisles were filled with people, and

we had no sooner got to our seats than everybody turned to look at us, so that Ben's face glowed like a red rose and I felt far from comfortable myself. Here, however, I could not but admire the wonderful self-possession of our sweethearts, who seemed to be wholly unconscious of the eyes turned upon them, but gave their attention entirely to the service, and looked as demure as cats that bask in front of a warm fire. So the service went on until the time came for reading out the banns of such folk as were to be married, and then indeed I felt that every eye in the church was upon us, and that the ploughboys in the dark corners under the belfry were smiling and the village girls laughing. As for me, I know not how I looked, but I professed to be mightily interested in Rose's Prayer-book, while poor Ben, after turning red and then white, finally folded his arms and fixed his eyes desperately on a certain corner of the roof, until Parson

Drumbleforth had made an end of our names for the third and last time, and went forward to the next part of the service.

Now, after morning prayer and sermon was over, and Holy Communion had been celebrated with such ceremonies as they use on Easter Day, we went out into the churchyard, and were there joined by Jack Drumbleforth, who brought us a message from his father to the effect that we must dine with him at the Vicarage, which invitation we straightway accepted. So Jack had us into the best parlour, where the vicar kept his books, and his father shortly appearing in his cassock and gown made us heartily welcome and gave us good advice upon our future enterprises, until Mistress Deborah called us to dinner. After the meal was over we amused ourselves with various matters until the time for afternoon service, when we all went to church again, Ben this time looking as bold as brass and carrying himself with

exceeding great dignity. And towards the end of the afternoon we walked homewards across the fields with many good and holy thoughts in our minds, which had been prompted by the influences of that great day. And there was only one regret in my heart, namely, that my dear father and mother were not there to see our happiness, but were lying side by side in their quiet graves in the churchyard which we had just left.

So the day had passed well enough until then, and it went better in the evening, when Rose and I went for a long walk across our fields, and talked, as lovers will talk, of past and present and future. We were happy enough, and I doubt not Ben and Lucy were the same, for they seemed on good terms with themselves when we went back home. The girls went early to bed that night, for there were many matters to be attended to in the morning. Ben and I therefore

were left to ourselves by nine o'clock, and for a good half-hour we sat staring at the fire with never a word to say.

"Heigho!" sighed Ben at last. "I wish it were to-morrow! I cannot rest for thinking of it. What are you going to do, Will?"

For I had risen and was going towards the door.

"I am going for a ride in the moonlight, Ben. 'Tis better than sitting over the fire and hearing thee sigh like a furnace."

"Marry, and a good notion too. Lend me a horse, and I will go with thee."

We made fast the house-door, and going to the stables, saddled and bridled our horses and rode away into the meadows. The moon had risen over the woods and everything was filled with a silver radiance. Spring as it was, there was yet a slight touch of frost in the night air, and the keenness of it seemed delightful as we put the

horses to a canter and went merrily across the land. Here and there a hare or a rabbit scudded out of our way; now a fox was roused from his couch and made off for the woods. Ben's spirits rose as we dashed along, and he laughed and sang until the woods echoed back his voice. Presently we left the meadows and went into the darkness of the long wood that stretches across country from Stapleton to Went Vale. There all was still and silent, save when some animal, fox, badger, or hare, broke cover and hurried away, or an owl, perched in a dead tree, uttered its dismal note. The trees were thick overhead, but here and there the moonlight flickered through some opening, and fell trembling on the bridle-path which we were traversing.

"Ah!" said Ben, "I am somewhat fond of my bed as a usual thing, but this is better than sleep. Come, let us spur up our steeds for another gallop."

So away we went under the dark roof of the woods until we had passed two miles of them and found ourselves in the high-road that leads from Darrington to Smeaton. We drew rein and looked around us.

"There is Castle Hill," said Ben.

I looked at the pile of buildings rising above us to our left. I had never set eyes on the place since the night when Philip Lisle and I visited it in search of Dennis and found him flown. I had desired nothing so much as to see it and its master when I rode away from Peterborough; nay, not even my own homestead and those it sheltered. But now my passion was dead, for Rupert Watson was beyond my reach. The Almighty vengeance had descended upon him in no scant measure.

"They say Rupert's madness increaseth," said Ben. "His nephew hath come to manage matters, and is doubtless whole and sole master now. They say, too, that——"

"My God, Ben!" I cried suddenly. "What is that? Look—by the gate of the fold."

Out of the gate right before us came a figure all in white, leading a grey horse by the bridle. My blood turned chill as I watched it: it looked so ghostly in the moonlight. As we stood rooted to the spot the figure leaped to the horse's back and came across the paddock in our direction.

"Will!" said Ben. "'Tis Rupert Watson! He hath risen from his bed—see, he hath his night-clothes on—and has come a-riding in his madness. A blind man riding! See, 'tis the old grey horse he used to ride to market."

"And it is blind, too," I whispered back. 'It hath been blind this two years. Ben, what shall we do? Must we not stop him and rouse his friends?"

"Hush!" said Ben. "Make no sound—let us see what he is after."

We stood silent and breathless at the roadside until that ghostly pair were close upon us. Then we saw that it was indeed Rupert Watson, clad in his night-clothes, with his white hair and beard falling about his face, and his sightless eyes burning with a fierce light. I shut my eyes and shivered, for the sight was a terrible one—a blind man riding a blind horse!

He passed us at a yard's distance, chattering and muttering to himself and the horse. When he had got to a little distance we turned our horses and followed him on the soft grass. In this way we rode up the hill. When we reached the summit we found the blind horse and its blind, mad rider standing on the highest bit of road, with their heads turned across the land as if they could see. Perhaps they had been used in other days to come there and gaze at the view. For before them in the moonlight stretched a long, level piece of moorland, nearly a mile

across, with neither wood nor hedge to bar their progress, and at its furthest limit a great drop of a hundred feet over Smeaton Crag.

"What are they doing—they can see naught?" whispered Ben, fearfully, as we drew near. "Hark—how he raves, Will!"

Rupert Watson had risen in his saddle and was shouting and gesticulating with fierce words and motions.

"A last ride, good Greyfoot!" he shouted. "A last ride together across the land. Let all the ghosts, and the dead men, and the devils of hell follow us. On! on!"

He drove his spur into the blind horse's side as he screamed out the last word. The horse neighed, rose on its hind feet, and then darted across the land like a mad thing, its rider shouting and yelling.

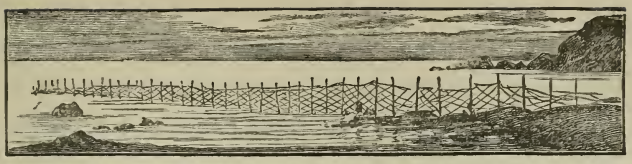
"Ride, Ben, ride!" I cried, and drove both spurs into Captain's sides. "Ride, man! The Crag! They will be over the Crag!"

Never in all my life did I ride as I rode that night in the moonlight after the awful figures that went before, screaming and yelling like demons of hell. The wind flew by me and cut my face, the horse shivered and quivered as I drove the spurs again and again into his sides; Ben, urging his steed with voice and whip, was left behind and out of sight in a minute. But not a yard did we gain on the mad rider and his mad horse. On, on, on they went like the wind. I rose in my stirrups and shouted after them, and still they flew forward. And then suddenly they came to the smooth, broad surface of the Crag, and beyond it the deep blackness of the valley, and beyond that the village of Smeaton sleeping in the moonlight across the vale. The awful figures in front abated nothing of their speed, but were over the Crag like a flash of lightning and lost in the abyss below.

I pulled up my own panting and suffering

beast, and drawing near to the Crag, laid myself along the ground and looked over. Far beneath me lay the grey horse and its rider, and beyond them the tiny Went ran babbling by with the moonbeams dancing on its rippling waters.

Thus came Rupert Watson to his end.



CHAPTER XVI.

HOW THE BELLS RANG OUT AT DARRINGTON.

IT was long past sunrise when I rose on the morning of my wedding-day, for the excitement of the previous night's adventure and the task of carrying Rupert Watson home had wearied me no little, and I had slept as soundly as a tired dog. When I went downstairs all was bustle and hurry in our house, for various female acquaintances of the family had arrived and were already busied in dressing the brides, which matter seemed likely to be a long operation, judging from the importance they all gave to it. As for Ben Tuckett, he had

been up and about for an hour or two, and was busy studying his attire in the mirror when I found him, for he had taken exceeding great pains in making himself fine.

"I thought thou wert going to sleep for ever," said he, as I came behind him. "What, man, 'tis nine o' the clock now, and we are to start for church at ten. Had we not best be seeing to our horses?"

"Time enough for that, Ben, in an hour. As for my horse, he will not be able to go out. Last night's work took too much out of him for that."

"Alack!" said Ben. "I have been dreaming of it all night. Never again shall we see such a sight as that. 'Twas no pleasant matter to be engaged in on the eve of a man's wedding."

"Have you told the girls of it?" I inquired.

"Yea, they and I were down here eating our breakfast by seven o'clock and I told

them the whole story," answered Ben. "I feared lest they should hear of it elsewhere. All the guests will be full of it, thou wilt see, when they come hither."

Then he fell to work smoothing his fine coat and arranging and rearranging his neckcloth and staring at himself in the mirror, so I left him and went to see that all things were in order for the marriage-feast, which was to be held when we came back from church. Now, we had no room in the house large enough for this, and we had therefore had one of the granaries swept and garnished for the occasion, and there the maids were laying out the feast under the orders of Mistress Deborah, who had come over to give us the benefit of her experience for that day. From the granary I went to the stables, where I found Jacob Trusty, who was busied in decorating all the horses with gay-coloured ribbons. Jacob himself was very fine, for he had gotten

himself new garments from the tailor, and wore a hat with a great plume in it, which was extravagance I never knew him guilty of before. Now, I no sooner appeared at the stable door than Jacob seized me by the hand and greeted me warmly, and gave me his fervent blessing, with a wish that I might live long and happily and see my children's children around me. No more earnest wish had I that day than this of Jacob's, for he meant every word of it.

"'Tis a great day this, lad," said Jacob, still busied with his ribbons. "I could die happy now that thou art taking thyself a wife. However, let me see thy son before I die. Then shall I have known four generations of Dales. Only one regret have I this day, lad, namely, that thy father and thy mother are not alive to see it."

"That is all that troubles me, Jacob."

"We cannot have all we would in this world," said he. "I doubt not they are

better off where they are, lad. Master Benjamin hath been telling me of what ye were at last night. Did I not tell thee, William, long ago, that thy father's murderers would reap the fruit of their misdeeds? Thou seest how it hath come about. When I spoke our house was full of woe and death; to-day it is full of joy and life, and Rupert Watson lieth yonder dead and there is none left of his name. He and his have received ample reward for their sins."

There was yet another task I had before me ere I returned to the house to receive the guests, who were already arriving. I took a spade and went to the corner of the garden where, many a year before, I had buried the little box containing Philip Lisle's guinea and the primrose which Rose had given me at my first parting from her. I soon brought the box to light, and opened it and took out the guinea and the flowers, which, because the box was of lead and

air-tight, were still preserved. There was the primrose which she had given me down in Went Vale, and with it the rose she added to it years after. Faded as they were, I pinned them carefully in my coat, and so went back to the house to look for Ben.

By that time there had already arrived a considerable number of our guests, who were all very gaily attired and had decorated their horses with ribbons. Now, too, came Jack Drumbleforth, who immediately constituted himself master of the ceremonies, and set to work to marshal everybody into his or her proper place. By the time I had gone round and shaken hands with everybody it was ten o'clock and time to set out for the church. Then came the brides from their chamber, and all the women ran to see them in the parlour, and Ben and I wanted to see them too, but were prevented by Jack, who vowed that we should not set eyes upon them until they joined us at the

altar. So we were forced to be content, and went out to our horses with our friends, and were duly arranged in a grand procession by Jack and Tom Thorpe. First of all rode twelve young farmers, my friends, whose horses were gaily decorated with ribbons and flowers; then came Ben and myself; after us followed several other of our friends, all similarly mounted and decorated, and after them rode Jack Drumbleforth and Tom Thorpe, escorting the brides, who rode on pillions behind them, and these were followed by four young gentlemen, escorting four young ladies, who were to act as maids to Rose and Lucy; and winding up the procession came Jacob Trusty and Timothy Grass, mounted on my two best cart-horses, and carrying great boughs of green stuff, so that the whole affair was quite magnificent, and delighted Ben so greatly that he sat his horse like an emperor.

Now, when we got into the village street at Darrington, we found that the folks there had been very busy since early morning, and had prepared us such a welcome as showed that they wished us well. For there was a great arch of green stuff across the high-road at the inn, and another at the entrance to the churchyard, and the church porch was gay with flowers. Here there was a great concourse of people gathered together, and we were saluted with right hearty cheers as we left our horses and walked into the church, where Parson Drumbleforth waited, book in hand, to receive us in the presence of a congregation which filled every corner. So Ben and I took up our places and our friends stood round us, and presently appeared Jack and Tom leading the brides, and the vicar began the solemn service that was to make us one for life. And when he came to that part where it is necessary that some one should

give the woman to the man, I stayed him and beckoned Jacob Trusty to come forward, and it was Jacob's hand that put my wife's in mine. So the service went on, and presently the last words were said, and we went out into the sunlight with the bells clashing and clanging joyously from the old tower above.

Now, we had no sooner emerged from the porch with our wives than we were surrounded by the crowd and greeted with such warmth as deeply touched us. Then Ben and I threw away all our small money for the children to scramble for, and sent more to the ringers in the belfry, so that they might refresh themselves and ring their merriest. And all this done we mounted our horses and reformed our procession to return home, but now our wives rode at the head with us, and Parson Drumbleforth, very fine in his best cap and cassock and silver-buckled shoes, rode at our side on his

white mare. So we returned to Dale's Field and were greeted with much affection by those who had remained behind, and I lifted Rose from my horse and took her across the threshold for the first time as mistress of my house.

Then followed the wedding-feast, whereat almost every friend we had was present, and the tables were crowded. Whether Ben or I felt most proud I know not, but he did often say in after-years that I looked as if I had conquered a city and won a rich treasure—as indeed I had. As for him, he plucked up his courage wonderfully now that the ordeal was over, and laughed and joked with every one, and made a speech that caused everybody to laugh exceedingly. We had plenty of speech-making indeed, for the vicar had some grave remarks to make, and Jack some humorous ones, and old Jacob, whom I had caused to sit near me in an honoured place, addressed a few words

to us, and there were toasts proposed and spoken to until everybody's health had been drunk. But there was one toast drunk in solemn silence and received with sad feelings by all of us, and that was to the memory of my dear father and mother and of Philip Lisle.

When the feast was over nothing would content Jack but a dance, and very soon he had sent for the fiddler and was arranging matters for country-dances on the lawn before the house. So all the young folks danced and the old ones sat round the garden and watched them, and whenever the fiddler stopped playing we heard the joyous jangle of the bells ringing out across the fields. So the afternoon wore away to evening, and at last the shadows fell across garden and meadow and our guests prepared to depart. And first of all Ben saddled his horse and made ready the pillion, and brought forth his wife, between whom and Rose there was much embracing, and they

too rode away, with half a dozen cavaliers to escort them to Master Ben's house at Pontefract. Then followed the others, in twos and threes and fours, their laughter ringing out happily along the highway. And last of all went Jack and his father, with many a wish for our happiness, and many a pressure of our hands, and we stood at the garden-gate, listening to the dying away of their horses' feet in the distance, and to the last merry peal of the bells in the church tower.

The last sound died away, the bells ceased with a final note of triumph; the twilight deepened, and the moon rose above the dark woods. We stood for a moment and looked across the familiar fields; then, hand in hand, we went into our house and closed the door and left the land sleeping in the moonlight.

And now if I had my own way I would

add nothing more to this history, because in all such matters that I have read there was no more written after the marriage of the folks most concerned. But my daughter Dorothy, who knows more of these things than I, insists that we must add somewhat to our narrative, because those who read it will want to know what became of all the people we have mentioned. Wherefore I must set down some particulars of them, according to her desire. Certainly I cannot say all that I might, because it is now near forty years since I was married to my dear wife, and in that time there have been all manner of things happen to me and my friends. But some particulars I can give, and will now proceed with my task.

And first as to Ben and Lucy. It was commonly said that there were no people in all England who were so exactly suited to each other as these two, for they seemed to understand each other to the smallest

degree, and never had contrary thoughts on any matter. What Lucy liked, Ben liked; what Ben wanted, Lucy was sure to want. So they walked the path of life, each thinking the other to be wellnigh perfect. They had no less than twelve children, five boys and seven girls, all of whom lived. Ben grew stout and rosy, and got prouder every time Lucy presented him with a new infant. He did well in his business and made money. Then he became a Councillor, and afterwards an Alderman. And in due time matters so prospered with him that they made him Mayor of his native town, and a prouder man I never saw than he was on the day of his election. He continued to grow stouter and rosier, and of more importance, until he died at the age of sixty, leaving Lucy to mourn him with sincere affection, which she did for nearly ten years, when she went to join him in a better world.

As for Parson Drumbleforth, he lived

many years after my wedding, and remained hale and hearty to the very end. Until the last week of his life he was used to come out to Dale's Field now and then and talk with us of the old bygone days. He was invariably accompanied by Jack, who had remained at home studying with his father, and who was, as the vicar said, very comforting to his declining years. Now, upon the Easter Sunday of 1658, the vicar had celebrated the Holy Communion in his parish church, and had kneeled down to make his thanksgiving, at which devotion he was so long engaged that Jack went to his side and touched him, only to find that the good old man was dead and had gone to finish his prayers in heaven. So then there came another vicar to Darrington, and Jack said farewell to us and rode away to London. It was many years before I saw him again, and then he stayed two nights at Dale's Field on his way north, and told

us that he was now become a clergyman and was going to a living in the North Riding. Likewise he had printed a little book of verses which had gained him some fame, and he gave a copy to Rose. So he went to his living and now abideth there, being an old man and a faithful minister, and amuseth himself with his garden and his verse-making, having never married.

Jacob Trusty, who was as true and loyal a friend as ever man had, lived until he was eighty-five years of age, and when he died we wept his loss as sincerely as if he had been a very near relation. For years before he died he did no work, but sat in his arm-chair by the fireside in our great kitchen. When my first boy was born, which was about a year after our marriage, Jacob's delight knew no bounds, and from that moment he gave over attending the cows and took to the chimney-corner, so that he might watch the baby. He would sit there

and rock the cradle for hours, and for the boy's sake he recalled many an old song, and sang it in his cracked voice as the lad sat on his knee. He saw more children of mine before he died, but it was my eldest son, William, that he worshipped, and the boy's hand held his when he died. I think that in him Jacob used to see me, for I often found them talking as Jacob and I had talked in the old days. It was a beautiful spring evening when Jacob died, and he had just said to me that though he had seen a good deal, he had never set eyes on aught so fair as our own acres. Then he laid his head back on the pillow, and holding my boy's little hand in his own—for they had carried the lad up to say good-night—he fell asleep, to wake in another world. And in him I lost one who had loved me and mine with a love which no words can do justice to.

And now for myself and my dear, dear

wife, whom truly I believe to have grown in every grace and virtue as the years have gone by. We have had six children, three boys and as many girls, and so far God hath taken none of them from us. In all our married life there has been no cloud, for we have been so happy in our love that nothing has seemed powerful enough to touch us. The years have come and gone, and every day she has grown dearer, and, as I think, more beautiful. It is true that she is now old, and that her once dark hair is grey; but to me who have loved her since she was a child, she has never changed. As I write these last words she is walking in the orchard with my eldest daughter, who is the very image of what her mother was many a year ago, and as I watch her my heart thanks God for His mercy in having given me so good and gentle a companion throughout my life. Truly, indeed, I have been favoured not a little.

I have had good friends, and loving friends, and there has been more of sunshine than of storm in my life. I have seen my children grow up around me, and at this moment I can hear the voices of my grandchildren playing under the apple-trees in my orchard. So let me bring this story of my life to an end by thanking God for all that He has done for me and mine, and above all for the true and gentle love that has been my guiding-star from first to last, that has made this world a heaven to me, and has never ceased to point my heart to all that is good, and holy, and eternal.

THE END.

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